Lyall, Alfred
Tennyson

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ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS

TENNYSON

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ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS

TENNYSON

BY

SIR ALFRED LYALL. K.C.B.

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TENNYSON

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD AT CAMBRIDGE

THAT the imaginative literature of a period preserves and represents the ideas, feelings, and manners of the generation to which it belongs, is sufficiently manifest. And Taine, in his exposition of the theory upon which he wrote his *History of English Literature*, affirms that any considerable literary work will exhibit, under careful analysis, not only the writer's state of mind, his experiences and way of life, but also the long-descended influences of race and tradition, the temper of his time, and the general intellectual condition of his nation. The choice of words (he says), the style, the metaphors used, the accent and rhythm of verses, the logical order of his reasoning, are all outward forms and signs of these complex impressions, and so of the environment that has moulded them. Literature, in short, may be employed by the critic and the historian as a delicate instrument for analysis, for investigating the psychology of the man and of his period, for laying bare the springs of thought and action which underlie and explain history. And poetry is the most intense expression of the dominant emotions and the higher ideals of the age.

Whether Taine did not press his theory too far

is a question that has been often debated; and at any rate the proper use of it demands a master-hand. Certain it is that each age has its peculiar spirit, its own outlook on the world; and that a great poet, or group of poets, absorb the new ideas growing up around them, and have the gift of inventing their appropriate fashion or setting. They are usually followed by a host of imitators; but when the work has been once well done, the highest imitative skill will not make it really worth doing again in the same manner; we must wait until the changing world closes one period and opens a fresh one. This point of view may perhaps be accepted in studying the life and works of one who has been the chief poet of our own time. It is true that the increasing variety and diffusion of literature during the nineteenth century interfere with the method of taking one writer, however eminent, as the intellectual representative of his society, and also that we do not yet stand at a sufficient distance from a contemporary poet to be able to measure accurately his position. Nevertheless, Tennyson's popularity grew so steadily and spread so widely for nearly sixty years, and his influence over his generation has been so remarkable, that his finest poetry may undoubtedly be treated as an illustrative record of the prevailing spirit, of the temperament, and to some degree of the national character of his period.

It is in Tennyson's poetry, moreover, that we must look for the chronicle of his life. That no biographer could so truly give him as he gives himself in his own works, are almost the first words of the preface to the admirable *Memoir* written of his father by the present Lord Tennyson. So thoroughly, indeed, and so

recently, has this biography been written, with such complete and exclusive command of all available materials, that in regard to the course and incidents of the poet's life it leaves almost nothing to be discovered or added; and every subsequent narrative must draw upon this source of information. Nearly all the private or personal facts and incidents connected with Tennyson or with his family have, therefore, been necessarily taken directly from the *Memoir*.[1]

Alfred Tennyson descended from a family that had been settled for some centuries in the north-east of England, at first in Holderness, beyond the Humber, and latterly in Lincolnshire. His father, Dr. George Clayton Tennyson, was Rector of Somersby near Horncastle, and of other small parishes. Mr. Howitt, writing in 1847, says of the Rector that he was a man of very various talents, something of a poet, a painter, an architect, and a musician. The poet's mother was Elizabeth, daughter of the Reverend Stephen Fytche. At Somersby he was born on the 6th August 1809; and when he was seven years old he was sent to school at the neighbouring town of Louth. In those days, and long afterward, boys made their first, often their hardest, experience of a rough world at a very tender age, for in these country schools the discipline was harsh and the manners rude; so that a child lived between fear of the master's rod and the bullying of his big schoolmates, and probably learnt little more than the habit of endurance. Professor Hales has left a record[2] of his experiences at this school, which

[1] The writer of this volume has made some occasional use of an article that he contributed on Tennyson to the *Edinburgh Review*.

[2] Appendix to vol. i. of the *Memoir*.

shows that the masters had a way of hitting the boys wantonly, an unconscious propensity to find amusement in giving pain that often becomes habitual. But Tennyson's school experiences, though early, were fortunately short, for after two years he was removed from Louth, and it appears that for the next ten years he was taught at home by his father, whose scholarship was considerable. No better luck can befall a boy who can avail himself of it than to be left to himself among good books while his mind is quite fresh; and Tennyson made full use of the Rector's ample library. His earliest verses, at fourteen or fifteen years of age, show uncommon promise; and in 1826, when he was seventeen, were published the *Poems by Two Brothers* (Alfred and Charles) upon a variety of subjects, grave and gay, evidently drawn from wide miscellaneous reading: the metrical composition is promising, while there are occasional signs of that descriptive faculty which matured so rapidly in Tennyson's later works. In 1828 he went, with his brother Charles, to Cambridge, and matriculated at Trinity College, where at first Alfred, being accustomed to home life, and not having passed through the preparatory ordeal of a public school, found himself solitary and ill at ease.

"I know not how it is, but I feel isolated here in the midst of society. The country is so disgustingly level, the revelry of the place so monotonous, the studies of the University so uninteresting, so much matter of fact. None but dry-headed, angular, calculating little gentlemen can take much delight in them." [1]

But his face and figure were both very remarkable, and his rare intellectual qualities could not long remain

[1] *Memoir*, vol. i. p. 34.

undiscovered. The list given in the *Memoir* of the friends with whom he consorted shows that he soon became intimate with the best men at Cambridge, whose admiration and attachment he rapidly won. It is evident that he had already a notable gift of terse and forcible expression, and the turn for apt metaphors which comes from a lively imagination. He lived among men who made the right use of a University, who delighted in the interchange of ideas and opinions, in the pursuit of knowledge, in the discussion of politics, in literature, speculation, and scientific discoveries; who were keenly interested in the world around them, and in the condition of their own country. In short, he was one of the few great English poets who have fallen in readily with the ways and manners of a cultured class and their social surroundings, who did not in their youth either hold themselves apart from the ordinary life of school or college, or live recklessly, or rebel against social conventions.

As the poets of the foregoing generation had been profoundly stirred in their first manhood by the revolutionary tumult in France, so Tennyson felt and sympathised, though more moderately, with the English agitation for reform. But in 1830 the period of wild enthusiasm for freedom, for the rights of man and for abstract political theories, had passed away; the vague hatred of priests and despots had become toned down into demands for reasonable improvements of Church and State. It was an age of practical Liberalism, of strong intellectual fermentation stimulated by the growing power of the Press; of energetic agitation for political, economical, and legislative reforms on one side, resisted on the other side by

stubborn defenders of antiquated institutions that were believed to be essential safeguards against the total overthrow of society. In those days the ardent young Liberal had a definite programme and a clear objective for his attack; though his impulse might be restrained by alarm at the violent methods and sweeping theories that were in vogue with extreme and resolute reformers. Tennyson was never of a sanguine temperament; and his reflective mind was always liable to be darkened by the apprehension of consequences. He represented, naturally, the temperate opinions on questions of Church and State of an educated Liberal, with whom rioting and violent Radicalism strengthened the fellow-feeling for widespread distress, and for the real needs and grievances of the people. The notes of bitter irony, the spirit of fierce revolt that run through the poetry of Byron and Shelley, belong to another time and temper. In Tennyson we have the Englishman's ingrained abhorrence of unruly disorder, the tradition of a State well balanced, of liberty fenced in by laws, of veneration for the past; we have the hatred of fanaticism in any shape, political or clerical, the distrust of popular impatience, the belief in the gradual betterment of human ills. In the verses to Mary Boyle, written long afterwards, he alludes to an incident that cannot but have accentuated his innate dread of mob-rule, which comes out in several passages of his later poems—

"In rick-fire days,
When Dives loathed the times, and paced his land
In fear of worse,
And sanguine Lazarus felt a vacant hand
Fill with *his* purse;

For lowly minds were madden'd to the height
By tonguester tricks,
And once—I well remember that red night
When thirty ricks,
All flaming, made an English homestead Hell—
These hands of mine
Have helpt to pass a bucket from the well
Along the line."

When he was asked what politics he held, he answered characteristically, 'I am of the same politics as Shakespeare, Bacon, and every sane man'; and he might not have objected to be classed, theologically, among those who restrict their confession of faith to the declaration that they hold the religion of all sensible men.

That Tennyson was numbered among the Apostles at Cambridge may be reckoned as a sign of his early reputation; the more so because he appears to have contributed very little, either by speech or writing, to the free discussions on things temporal and spiritual of that notable society. He is depicted as smoking and meditating, sitting in front of the fire, summing up argument in one short phrase; and the only essay that he produced he was too modest to deliver. Of the Apostles various reminiscences survive; the subjoined extract may be quoted to explain its constitution and character:—

"The very existence of this body was scarcely known to the University at large, and its members held reticence to be a point of honour. . . . The members were on the lookout for any indications of intellectual originality, academical or otherwise, and specially contemptuous of humbug, cant, and the qualities of the windbag in general. To be elected, therefore, was virtually to receive a certificate from some of your cleverest contemporaries that they regarded you likely to be

in future an eminent man. The judgment so passed was perhaps as significant as that implied by University honours, and a very large proportion of the Apostles have justified the anticipation of their fellows."[1]

In Tennyson's case the apostolic prophecy has been undoubtedly fulfilled; and his prize poem on Timbuctoo, written in his twentieth year, soon appeared to confirm among his friends their first augury of his future celebrity. It was patched up, he tells us, from an old poem on the Battle of Armageddon, a curious adaptation of subjects that might be supposed to have nothing in common; except, possibly, such hazy distances of space and time as might afford wide scope to a poet's imagination.

Academic distinction in verse may have often suggested predictions of coming fame, yet these are rarely fulfilled, for the stars of poetical genius run in irregular courses. Tennyson's poem had the usual qualities of correct taste and polished diction, but it also showed much originality of treatment and creative fancy; for the writer, instead of attempting the unpromising task of describing a den of savages, or of rendering poetically the accounts brought home by travellers, places himself on a mountain that overlooks the great ocean, muses over the fabled Atlantis, dreams of Eldorado, and asks—

> "Wide Afric, doth thy Sun
> Lighten, thy hills unfold a city as fair
> As those which starred the night of the elder world?
> Or is the rumour of thy Timbuctoo
> A dream as frail as those of ancient time?"

He is wondering whether the reality of some such

[1] *Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen*, by Leslie Stephen.

lorious vision may not be hidden far in the recesses f the dark Continent. To him appears the Spirit of he Ideal, symbolising

> "The permeating life which courses through
> All th' intricate and labyrinthine veins
> Of the great mine of Fable,"

nd shows him a river winding through

> "The argent streets of the city, imaging
> The soft inversion of her tremulous domes.

But

> "The time has well nigh come
> When I must render up this glorious home
> To keen Discovery,"

vhen the brilliant towers shall shrink and shiver into huts

> "Black specks amid a waste of dreary sand
> Low-built, mud-walled, barbarian settlements.
> How changed from this fair city!"

This, the first, poem of Tennyson is worth notice because it contains in embryo the qualities which emerge in his later verse, his delight in picturesque and luxuriant description, his meditative power of falling into moods which give full scope, as in a trance or dream, to the roving imagination; his manner of presenting ideas symbolically. Although Charles Wordsworth wrote of it that at Oxford the poem might have qualified its author for a lunatic asylum, Arthur Hallam, who was beaten in the competition, laid stress, in a letter to W. E. Gladstone, on its "splendid imaginative power," and said that he considered Tennyson as "promising fair to be the greatest poet of our generation"—a remarkably far-seeing pre-

diction to have been built on so slender a foundation. A review in the *Athenæum* (at that time under the joint-editorship of John Sterling and Frederick Maurice) declared that it "indicated really first-rate poetical genius, which would have done honour to any man that ever wrote." The poem, in blank verse, was recited in the Senate House by the late Dean Merivale, since the ordeal was too much for Tennyson's habitual diffidence.

The *Memoir* has preserved for us several poems written by Tennyson at Cambridge (1828-1831) that were never published. In one of these, "Anacaona," which was suppressed (we are told) because the natural history and the rhymes did not satisfy him, the verses are full of glowing tropical scenery; but at that time he did not care for absolute descriptive accuracy. The scientific spirit, in fact, had not yet laid its hold on him; and the following stanza, given here as a sample, shows that he was taking his juvenile pleasure in sumptuous colouring and in sounding versification—

> "In the purple island,
> Crown'd with garlands of cinchona.
> Lady over wood and highland,
> The Indian queen, Anacaona,
> Dancing on the blossomy plain
> To a woodland melody:
> Playing with the scarlet crane,
> The dragon-fly and scarlet crane,
> Beneath the papao tree!
> Happy, happy was Anacaona,
> The beauty of Espagnola,
> The golden flower of Hayti!"

The "Song of the three Sisters" is in the same early manner, yet it clearly presages his later dithy-

ambic style; and the blank verse in the prelude exhibits the undeveloped quality of an artist in romantic landscape-painting—

"The North wind fall'n, in the new-starréd night
Zidonian Hanno, wandering beyond
The hoary promontory of Soloë,
Past Thymiaterion in calméd bays
Between the southern and the western Horn,
Heard neither warbling of the nightingale,
Nor melody o' the Libyan Lotus-flute
Blown seaward from the shore; but from a slope
That ran bloom-bright into the Atlantic blue,
Beneath a highland leaning down a weight
Of cliffs, and zoned below with cedar-shade,
Came voices like the voices in a dream
Continuous—till he reach'd the outer sea."

Another piece may be worth quoting, as the first indication of the brooding philosophic mind that is reflected through so much of Tennyson's poetry—

"Thou may'st remember what I said
When thine own spirit was at strife
With thine own spirit. 'From the tomb
And charnel-place of purpose dead,
Thro' spiritual dark we come
Into the light of spiritual life.'

God walk'd the waters of thy soul,
And still'd them. When from change to change,
Led silently by power divine,
Thy thought did scale a purer range
Of prospect up to self-control,
My joy was only less than thine."

In these lines we have the contemplative mood struggling into as yet imperfect metrical expression; and the two foregoing quotations may be taken to

illustrate two salient characteristics of all Tenny son's poetry—his delight in external beauty, and th inward uneasiness of a mind oppressed by the enigm of human existence, yet finding solace in a kind o spiritual quietism, and in the glimmer of light some where far beyond the surrounding darkness.

CHAPTER II

POEMS, 1830-1842

EFORE he left Cambridge (where he did not wait for degree), his "Poems, chiefly Lyrical," were published. ; has already been observed that a group of original oets take up the whole ground of their generation; ıey so act upon their audience, and are again reacted pon sympathetically, that, for a time, nothing new is ıid or shaped. This may account, in some degree, for ıe barren interval that may be noticed in the annals f a country's literature; there was one such interval ; the end of the eighteenth century, when the era f classic composition had closed, and the Romantic pirit, just born, had as yet become hardly articulate; ıd since the closing years of the nineteenth century ıother dearth of poetry has set in. At the present ıoment the field is still held by Tennyson and Brown-ıg, nor has their challenger yet appeared in the lists.

When Tennyson came forward in 1830 the mar-ellous constellation of poets that illumined the rst quarter of the century had almost vanished, in ıe sense of their work being finished; for although Vordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott were still alive, ıey had attained immortality; they were above and eyond the special influences of an altering world; ıey could not interpret or inform the aspirations or isquietudes of a younger generation. Those subtle,

indefinable modifications of style and feeling, co
tinuous yet always changing, which go on in th
world and around us, are nowhere more clearly pe
ceptible than in poetry: the impress of a great maste
in any art deeply affects his immediate successors; bu
he has almost always given his best to his conten
poraries in early manhood, and the school which h
has founded can do little more than imitate hin
When, as in Tennyson's case, he keeps the field an
retains his productive powers for more than half
century, he may be likened to a great spreading tre
that checks the upspring of vigorous undergrowth; h
remains the model and criterion of poetic excellenc
Yet an unconscious feeling that the vein has bee
nearly worked out produces the desire for novelty
while there is simultaneously a continuous growth
fresh ideas engendered by changing views of lif
which demand their own interpreter, and have to figh
hard for ascendency against the established tast
Here may probably be found one reason why th
established organs of criticism so often go wrong
their estimate of an original writer when he first com
before the public; they judge by a literary standar
that is becoming superseded; they are out of touc
with the movements of the advancing party; the
often maintain a sound æsthetic tradition, but the
are slow to amend or enlarge their laws in accordan
with new feelings and methods; they notice shor
comings and irregularities, but they sometimes la
discernment of the very qualities which attract th
poet's contemporaries.[1] We know that even Coleridg

[1] An acute and very interesting dissertation on the develo
ment of æsthetic taste and fashion may be read in Mr. Arth

ough he saw much beauty in Tennyson's poems, said at he could scarcely scan the verses, and passed upon em the criticism that the new poet had begun to rite poetry without very well knowing what metre On the other hand, however, Coleridge said in his *ble Talk* (April 1830)—"Mr. Tennyson's sonnets, ch as I have read, have many of the characteristic cellences of Wordsworth and Southey." It was ng before the *Quarterly Review*, which began by eating him with contempt, could find anything tter for Tennyson than sarcastic approbation. Yet e article in *Blackwood*, on his first volume, by "Christpher North," does show considerable discrimination, d on the whole, although Tennyson naturally resented must have been rather to his advantage than otherse; for the critic undoubtedly hit with sharp but not kindly ridicule the marks of affectation and lavish nament that belonged to the poet's immaturity. Most the pieces which *Blackwood* condemned were rightly itted in subsequent editions; and in regard to those ich he praised, the judgment has been generally held by later opinion. But a new writer's surest gury of future success is to be found in an ardent lcome by his contemporaries; it is a sign that he is t a mere imitator, however artistic, of past models, at he has caught the spirit and is quickening the notions of the generation with which he has to live. thur Hallam wrote enthusiastically of the Lyrical ems in the *Englishman's Magazine*; and in the *Westnster Review* John Bowring hailed the advent of an iginal poet, with powers that imposed upon him high

lfour's book on the *Foundations of Belief*, chap. ii. sections nd 2.

responsibility for the use of them. Some of the piec contained in this first edition were omitted in subs quent reprints, though of these several reappeare later; and all that Tennyson decided to preserve stan in the latest collective edition under the title "Juvenilia." Here, again, as throughout his later wor we have the poet's tendency to doubts and to gloom meditation on man's short and sorrowful existenc side by side with a kind of rapturous delight in th beauties of nature and the glories of art. We hav the "Confessions of a Sensitive Mind" that finds n comfort in creeds, and ends with the prayer for light-

> "Oh teach me yet
> Somewhat before the heavy clod
> Weighs on me, and the busy fret
> Of that sharp-headed worm begins
> In the gross blackness underneath,"

followed closely by the brilliant vision of Orient splendour in the "Recollections of the Arabian Nights

> "Then stole I up, and trancedly
> Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
> Serene with argent-lidded eyes
> Amorous, and lashes like to rays
> Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
> Tressed with redolent ebony,
> In many a dark delicious curl,
> Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone;
> The sweetest lady of the time,
> Well worthy of the golden prime
> Of good Haroun Alraschid."

Verily a sight to dispel carking intellectual anxietie It may be remarked, however, that in this passage,

so in the amorous lyrics to Isabel and Madeline, hich are full of delicate voluptuousness, the juve-ile poet is too pictorial; his way of producing an nage of lovely woman is by enumerating her harms; he describes beauty in detail as it might e painted, instead of describing its effects, as the reat poets, from Homer downward, are usually ontent to do. Although Tennyson's natural artistic eling corrected his earlier manner in this respect, et the propensity to be descriptive, to elaborate a cture as a painter works upon his canvas, remained roughout a leading characteristic of his poetic yle.

Soon after the publication of his first volume ennyson made a journey to the Pyrenees, where he ad some secret meetings with the Spanish refugees ho, under Torrigo's leadership, were concerting the sh enterprise against the Spanish government that nded with the military execution of the whole party hen they landed near Malaga in November 1831. e returned to live at Somersby, and about this time ore verses were circulating among his friends, by hom, particularly by Arthur Hallam, he was urged publish them. At Cambridge they received unani-ous Apostolic benediction, with perpetual reading nd diverse commentaries, until they were brought ut toward the end of 1832. The "Lover's Tale," ritten in the poet's nineteenth year, and partly inted, was judiciously withdrawn from this issue the last moment. A long poem in blank verse, etraying immaturities of style which the other eces showed him to have outgrown, would have arred, as Tennyson himself said, the complete-

ness of the book, and would certainly have adde more weight than worth to the collection. Fo this volume undoubtedly contains some of the mos exquisite poetry that he ever wrote—"Mariana in th South," "The Lady of Shalott," and "The Palace o Art."

His method of producing an impression by groupin details was used with great skill in these poems fo scenic effects. In Mariana in the Moated Grang we see how a few words can take hold of an enchant the fancy until it conjures up images o the landscape, the mournful aspect of a decay ing house in a level waste, the chill air of gre dawn, the varying moods of despondency tha follow the alternations of sun and shadow, o light and darkness, as they pass before a solitar watcher who looks vainly for some one who neve comes—

"About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept.
And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'"

This profusion of accurate detail in filling up th picture is very characteristic of Tennyson's manner, s different from Wordsworth's, who is usually content t

paint the background of his figures by a few strokes.[1] This rare power of giving atmosphere to a poem—of suggesting the correspondence and interaction between the mind and its surroundings, between the situation and the subjective feelings—comes out even more forcibly in Mariana in the South, where we have the troubled sleep in exhaustion produced by intense heat, with the dream of cool breezes and running brooks, and the waking to consciousness of bare desolation—

> "She woke : the babble of the stream
> Fell, and, without, the steady glare
> Shrank one sick willow sere and small.
> The river-bed was dusty-white ;
> And all the furnace of the light
> Struck up against the blinding wall."

To those who have been besieged and cooped up for many hours by the fierce sun beating against the walls of some dismal place of shelter, these lines will vividly recall a familiar sensation.

When this poem, first published in 1832, reappeared ten years later, it had been almost rewritten ; but by comparing the two versions one can see how Tennyson had pruned and condensed his style, always aiming at greater precision, and at producing the vivid impression in fewer words. It may be interesting to set the two opening stanzas of each version side by side.

[1] For example, in "The Tables Turned—An Evening Scene," there is but one descriptive stanza—

> "The sun, above the mountain's head,
> A freshening lustre mellow
> Through all the long green fields has spread,
> His first sweet evening yellow."

(1832.)

"Behind the barren hills upsprung
With pointed rocks against the light,
The crag sharpshadowed overhung
Each glaring creek and inlet bright.
Far, far, one light blue ridge was seen,
Looming like baseless fairyland
Eastward a strip of burning sand,
Dark rimmed with sea, and bare of green.
Down in the dry salt-marshes stood
That house dark-latticed. Not a breath
Swayed the rich vineyard underneath,
Or moved the dusty southernwood.
Madonna, with melodious moan,
Sang Mariana, night and morn—
Madonna, lo! I am all alone,
Love-forgotten and love-forlorn."

(1842.)

"With one black shadow at its fe
The house thro' all the le
shines,
Close-latticed to the brooding h
And silent in its dusty vines:
A faint-blue ridge upon the righ
An empty river-bed before,
And shallows on a distant sho
In glaring sand and inlets bright
But 'Ave Mary,' made
moan,
And 'Ave Mary,' night
morn,
And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be
alone,
To live forgotten, and
forlorn.'"

In both versions the abundance of epithets is remarkable; there is hardly a substantive unqualified; but in the later version the description is less particular, and altogether much more compressed.

The moral of The Palace of Art is the insufficiency of external beauty to ward off the discontent, gradually sinking into despair, that invades a soul when it has planned out a life of God-like isolation among the most perfect creations of painting, statuary, and architecture. Form and colour, great historical portraits, splendid landscapes, the purity of marble, the rich light pouring in through stained glass, adorn the Palace of Art. The working out of such a design strains the power of descriptive poetry to its utmost effort; for here it enters into a kind of rivalry with

the sister arts on their own ground: the poet must imagine images; he is imitating Nature at second-hand, and is among all the snares that beset word-painting. Tennyson attempted, but abandoned, the arduous task of "doing a statue in verse"; he struck out the five stanzas introducing the statues of Elijah and Olympias; he shortened his catalogue and weeded out his gallery; and the alterations which the poem underwent in successive editions show the labour that it cost him. He thus succeeded in executing a series of exquisitely finished pictures, having in his mind, possibly, the Homeric shield of Achilles; though the scenes on the shield represent movement, as on a temple's frieze, whereas Tennyson portrays also single incidents, figures, or effects of still life, as in a great picture gallery:—

> "And one, a full-fed river winding slow
> By herds upon an endless plain,
> The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
> With shadow-streaks of rain.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
> As fit for every mood of mind,
> Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there
> Not less than truth design'd."

In each stanza the keynote or *motif* is struck with a masterly power of suggestion, until we return to what poetry alone can express—the soul's delight in a representation of external beauty, and finally the intellectual weariness and spiritual prostration of the soul among all this outward magnificence.

> "O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
> O shapes and hues that please me well!
> O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
> My Gods, with whom I dwell!"

Her God-like isolation sinks into a feeling of consternation at her solitude—

> "As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,
> In doubt and great perplexity,
> A little before moon-rise hears the low
> Moan of an unknown sea."

Perfection of culture, Art for Art's sake, has no deep root in the heart of man, and flowers but to fade rapidly; it strikes a deep root only when it gives a moral representation of life.

Yet nothing is more rare or difficult than the presentation of some general truth, in prose or verse, by a story with inner significance, like the parables of a religious teacher. By symbolism, which is a more delicate instrument than metaphor, the second term of the comparison, the application of the narrative, is intimated but not expressed. If the meaning is vague or too much hidden, it is missed; if it is brought out too obviously, the mysterious charm disappears. In The Lady of Shalott we are not far below the high-water mark of symbolic poetry, the art which one of the latest schools of French poetry has been practising with doubtful success, being foiled mainly by the incurable lucidity and precision of the French language. The final version of this poem shows much less revision than in most of his early writings, although the careful pruning away of anything that might sound trivial or familiar is observable in such alterations as that whereby the Lady now writes her name "round about the prow," instead of "below the stern," where she wrote it originally, and where an ordinary boatman would have painted it. And since The Lady of Shalott is one of Tennyson's masterpieces, we may select it as an

xample of his genius at a period when he had brought he form and conception of his poetry up to a point hich he never afterwards surpassed.

Undoubtedly his work is throughout elaborate, in he sense that he meditated long over the composition, nd spared no pains to attain perfection. Tennyson rranged and polished indefatigably his blank verse, hat purely English metre which more than any other ives scope to scientific construction, disdaining the dventitious aid of rhyme. The normal line consists, s every one knows, of five iambics marked not only by uantity but also by accentuation; and it is the mobility f the English accent, as compared with the regularity f prosodial notation, that gives such freedom to English verse, and is one of the elements that combine o make our language so excellent for poetry. And he skill of the consummate artist in blank verse finds ts triumph in the infinite variety of measured sounds hich he can draw from a five-stringed instrument hat seems easy to play upon, yet is droning and edious in all but a few hands.[1]

The return, so noticeable in English poets of the ineteenth century, to the divine and heroic myths of ncient Greece, may be said to have begun with Keats, who endowed them with new life by the ardent play of is romantic imagination, and did it none the worse or his slight acquaintance with the originals. Tennyon continued a similar treatment of them with much nore accurate knowledge. The concrete and sculpured figures of the antique legend or fable, in Œnone, Ulysses, and Tithonus, were endued with warmth and

[1] See *Chapters on English Metre*, by J. B. Mayor (1886).

fresh colour by becoming the impersonations of th impulses and affections of modern life—love unre quited, lassitude, restlessness, the roaming spirit, th *ennui* of old age, philosophic ardour or serenity.

The poem of Œnone is the first of Tennyson' elaborate essays in a metre over which he afterward obtained an eminent command. It is also the firs of his idylls and of his classical studies, with thei melodious rendering of the Homeric epithets and th composite words, which Tennyson had the art c coining after the Greek manner ("lily-cradled,' "river sundered," "dewy-dashed") for compact description c ornament. Several additions were made in a late edition; and the corrections then made show wit what sedulous care the poet diversified the structur of his lines, changing the pauses that break the mono tonous run of blank verse, and avoiding the use c weak terminals when the line ends in the middle of sentence. The opening of the poem was in this manne decidedly improved; yet one may judge that the fines passages are still to be found almost as they stood i the original version; and the concluding lines, in whic the note of anguish culminates, are left untouched :—

> "O mother, hear me yet before I die.
> Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
> Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
> Walking the cold and starless road of Death
> Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
> With the Greek woman."

Nevertheless the blank verse of Œnone lacks the eve flow and harmonious balance of entire sections in th Morte d'Arthur or Ulysses, where the lines are swi or slow, rise to a point and fall gradually, in cadence

rranged to correspond with the dramatic movement, howing that the poet has extended and perfected his netrical resources. The later style is simplified; he has ejected cumbrous metaphor; he is less sententious; e has pruned away the flowery exuberance and lightned the sensuous colour of his earlier composition.

In the Lotos-Eaters we have an old Greek fable of vandering sailors reaching an unknown land of fruit nd flowers; and the poem's rich long-drawn melody, vith its profusion of scenic description, is in strong ontrast to the quiet line and feeling of the Homeric arrative; where the impression is created by describng, not the environment, but its effect upon the men. "Whosoever did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the otos had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come ack, but there he chose to abide with the lotos-eating nen, ever feeding on the lotos, and forgetful of his omeward way." Out of this the modern poet creates splendid choric song, of way-worn mariners overcome y dreamy languor in a beautiful island, to whom their omes and their fatherland are becoming no more than far-off memory. It may be that the ancient myth is marvellous tradition of some real incident, when a hipwrecked crew settled down upon some island in climate and among a people not unlike those which vere discovered by the first European adventurers n the South Pacific Ocean; for even in the story of he Mutiny of the Bounty we can trace the influence f lotos-eating upon British sailors. The concluding trophe of the Ode as it now stands was substituted n 1843 for lines of a different structure and very nferior merit. The gods of Epicurus are the proper ivinities of the lotos-eaters; they look down care-

lessly through the clouds at the strife and misery o the world—

"Over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps an fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, an praying hands."

In the picture of luxurious repose as the ultimat bliss attainable both in this world and in heaven w have the shadow of the earth projected on the sky; i is that natural reflection of human experience an desires which is the common source of all primitiv conceptions of a future existence.

The *Quarterly Review*[1] noticed these poems in sarcastic article (by Kinglake, the author of *Eothen* that missed all the beauties, yet hit the blots. Tha the criticism, although short-sighted enough as a appreciation, was yet salutary, is proved by the co rections afterwards made by Tennyson in passage where the thin partition that divides simplicity fro triviality had been overstepped, or where the metr had not yet attained the strength and sure harmoni tones of his later workmanship. These old-fashione reviewers, like the headmasters who ruled great publi schools by incessant castigation, laboured honestly i their vocation of maintaining the classic traditions and there was a masculine common-sense in thei discipline that was by no means unwholesome. Bu for an example of impenitent conservatism and o insensibility to true genius, because it was new, th following sentence taken from an article in th *Quarterly Review*[2] upon the poems of Monckton Milne is not easily to be matched:—

[1] 1839. [2] *Ibid.*

"We are quite sure that he [Milnes] will hereafter obey one od precept in an otherwise doubtful decalogue :—

'Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope,'

d regret few sins more bitterly than the homage he has now ndered at the fantastic shrines of such baby idols as Mr. hn Keats and Mr. Alfred Tennyson."

'e have here the men who adore the great image authority, and denounce all novelties as heretical. ne reviewer adopts Byron's creed, but overlooks yron's own triumphant desertion of it; for in his iest poems there is no trace of the great masters nom Byron professed to worship. He received a ell-merited rebuke from J. S. Mill, who wrote in e *London Review* (1835) an article condemning the ort-sighted incompetency of the *Quarterly's* critic, cognising Tennyson as a true artist of high promise, d passing upon The Lady of Shalott a judgment in nich the present writer ventures entirely to agree :—

"Except that the versification is less exquisite, 'The Lady Shalott' is entitled to a place by the side of the 'Ancient ariner' and 'Christabel.'"

For it should not have been difficult to perceive at in this second volume of poems the promise and tency of Tennyson's genius were clearly visible, and at the ascent was gradual because the aims were gh. The blemishes often signified no more than uberant strength; and James Montgomery's observa- on of him at this stage is generally true as a standing st of latent powers in a beginner :—

"He has very wealthy and luxurious thought and great auty of expression, and is *a poet.* But there is plenty of om for improvement, and I would have it so. Your trim

correct *young* writers seldom turn out well. A young po should have a great deal which he can afford to throw away he gets older."[1]

Although Tennyson's father died in 1831, remained with the family at Somersby Rectory unt 1837, making occasional visits elsewhere, to Mabl thorpe on the bleak Lincolnshire coast, to Londo and once crossing the sea to Holland for a journey u the Rhine to Cologne and Bonn. It was a tumultuo period in Continental no less than in English politic and though Tennyson welcomed the Reform mov ment at home, he was in some trepidation lest might open the floodgates of democracy upon t foundations of ancient institutions. "The instigati spirit of Reform," he wrote, "will bring on the co fiscation of Church property, and may be the downfa of the Church altogether; but the existence of t sect of St. Simonists in France is at once a proof the immense mass of evil that is extant in the nin teenth century, and a focus which gathers all i rays."[2] His hope of never seeing "St. Simon in t Church of Christ" has at any rate been amply fu filled; and the mere apprehension shows that he ha not yet, naturally, measured the difference between religion and a scientific philosophy, or the former's i calculable superiority in the domain of things spiritu In religion, as in politics, Tennyson's convictions grad ally settled down into a hopeful optimism, occasional shaken by fits of splenetic doubt and of discomfitu at the spectacle of human errors and misery. I believed in the remote eventual perfectibility of cree and also of constitutions; but about this time t

[1] *Memoir.* [2] *Ibid.*

nward clouds were gathering on the political horizon, d he was never without some fear lest society might caught unprepared in some sudden storm :—

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire."

This habit of cautious moderation and profound strust of popular impatience, the dislike of excess audacity in opinion which belongs to the contemative artist, possessed Tennyson from youth to age, d occasionally lowered the temperature of his verse. et Tennyson, like Burke, had great confidence in e common-sense and inbred good-nature of the nglish people. Stagnation, he once said, is more ngerous than revolution. As he was throughout nsistently the poet of the *via media* in politics, the gnified constitutional Laureate, so he was spared e changes that passed over the opinions of Wordsorth, Southey, and Coleridge, who were Radicals their youth, and declined into elderly Tories. The mper of the times affected his poetry in a contrary ay; for his ardour rather increased with his age. e attained manhood in the middle of the calm period at followed the long, tumultuous years when all urope was one vast battlefield, when the ardent irits of Byron and Shelley had been fired by the fierce llying of the European nations against Napoleon. was the Crimean War, twenty years later, that first ought out Tennyson upon the battlefield; while at me the subsidence of violent Radicalism encouraged s Liberal attitude toward internal politics.

In the autumn of 1833 came the news that Arthur allam, his dearest friend, who had been engaged to

Emily Tennyson, had died suddenly at Vienna, h last letter to Tennyson being dated a week befor his death. Arthur Hallam may be counted amon those men whom the unanimous consent of all the fellows marks out for high future distinction, an whose brilliant opening upon life, closed abruptly b early death, invests their memory with a kind o romance, explaining and almost justifying the antiqu conception of Fate and divine envy. Tennyson heart was pierced with bitter sorrow, and filled with sense of life's dreary insignificance. He wrote th first sections of his famous elegy upon his friend, an began that poem, The Two Voices, which takes u again the ancient strain of mortal man wrestling wit the temptation to despair, when irremediable misfo tune seems to render life nothing worth, a momentar existence destined to vanish into the cold oblivio that hides so many generations of the past.

The Memorial poem underwent many years of incu bation. In the meantime Tennyson's mind was als on other poetic subjects. Sir Henry Taylor publishe in 1834 his drama of Philip van Artevelde, with preface containing the author's views upon moder poetry in general, and some criticisms upon Byro and Shelley in particular. The essence of his di sertation was that "poetry is Reason self-sublimed that Byron's verse was too unreasonably passionat the product of personal vanity unbridled by sob sense and study; and that Shelley let his fancy ru riot in melodious rhapsodies. It was the somewha austere judgment of a cultured intellect upon th romantic revival, which was representing the deman for liberty and a wider range of ideas in art, as th

beral movement did in politics, among the poets
nom Taylor designated as the Phantastic school.
nnyson's observation upon these criticisms is just
d far-seeing:—

"I close with Taylor in most that he says of modern poetry,
ough it may be that he does not take sufficiently into con-
eration the peculiar strength evolved by such writers as
ron and Shelley, who, however mistaken they may be, did
t give the world another heart and new pulses, and so we
kept going. Blessed be those who grease the wheels
the old world, insomuch that to move on is better than
nding still."[1]

No man, as we know, was less disposed than
nnyson to undervalue intellectual serenity or
ythmic perfection; yet he saw that Byron, with
e fiery impetus of his careless verse, and Shelley,
th his strong-winged flights into the realms of
antasy, were men of daring genius who had quick-
ed the pace and widened the imaginative range of
nglish poetry.

During these years Tennyson was living in retire-
ent at Somersby. His correspondence, then and
ways, appears to have been so rare and fitful that it
eates a serious difficulty for the ordinary biographer,
no misses the connected series of letters that provide
important and interesting a clue to be followed in
cing the incidents, the opinion on passing events,
e interchange of literary and political impressions,
the lives of illustrious or notable men. For paucity
correspondence Tennyson is indeed singular among
odern English poets. Cowper, Scott, and Byron
nd in the foremost rank of our letter-writers, and
eir correspondence is in volumes; while Matthew

[1] *Memoir.*

Arnold has actually predicted that Shelley's lette
might survive his poems. Coleridge's familiar lette
are amusing, pathetic, and reflective, full of a kin
of divine simplicity; he is alternately indignant an
remorseful; he soars to themes transcendent, an
sinks anon to the confession of his errors and embarras
ments. Wordsworth's letters contain rural scener
and lofty moral sentiment. They all belonged to th
rapidly diminishing class of eminent men who hav
freely poured their real sentiments and thoughts out
their brain into correspondence with friends, givin
their best without keeping back their worst, so th
we can follow the stages of their lives and thought
and the letters thus preserve for us the clear-cu
stamp of their individuality. The occasional letters
Tennyson given in the *Memoirs* are characterist
and entertaining, thrown off usually in the lig
play of wit and good-humour; but for early glimps
of him we have to rely mainly upon the letters
reminiscences of his friends. In 1835 he was wi
the Speddings in the Lake country, where he m
Hartley Coleridge, who, "after the fourth bottom
gin, deliberately thanked Heaven for having broug
them acquainted,"[1] and wrote a sonnet in celebratio
thereof. A visit to Wordsworth at Rydal Mou
he would not then be persuaded to undertake, thoug
the Laureate of the day and his successor did con
together at a dinner party a few years later. M
Aubrey de Vere has described the meeting;[2] and
has told us that Wordsworth soon afterwards wro
in a letter to a friend that Tennyson was "decided
the first of our living poets." In connection wi

[1] *Memoir.* [2] *Ibid.*

is incident Mr. de Vere is reminded of a con-
rsation with Tennyson, who was enthusiastic over
e songs of Burns—"You forget, for their sake,
ose stupid things, his serious pieces." The same
y Mr. de Vere met Wordsworth, who praised Burns
en more vehemently than Tennyson had done, but
ded—"Of course, I refer to his serious efforts, those
olish little amatory songs of his one has to forget."
After 1837 the Tennyson family changed their resid-
ce more than once, first migrating from Somersby to
gh Beech in Epping Forest, and thence in 1840 to
nbridge Wells. Tennyson made various excursions
out England; and at Warwick he met again Fitz-
rald, who had been with him in the Lake country,
en they visited together Kenilworth and Stratford-
-Avon, where Tennyson, seized with enthusiasm,
ote his name among those scribbled all over the room
which Shakespeare was born—"a little ashamed of
afterwards." He came by Coventry to London,
d composed Godiva, of which Charles Sumner, the
nerican, wrote to Monckton Milnes that it was
nequalled as a narrative in verse"; he also went to
lton Abbey and North Wales, leading a tranquil and
atemplative life in a period of political and ecclesias-
al agitation, sedulously husbanding his powers,
ditating on the problems of existence, and collecting
pressions in his journeys about England. He was far
m being indifferent to current politics or theological
ntroversies; he took a close interest in the Oxford
vement; nor did he make light of the grievances
d demonstrations of the Chartists. Yet his attitude
ms to have been that of the philosophic spectator
o surveys from a height the field of action; he did

not fling himself into the fighting line, like Byron Shelley, whose poetry glows with the fiery enthusias of combatants in the strife over political or religio causes and ideas, or like Coleridge, who declared th all the social evils of his day arose from a false a godless empiricism, and anxiously expounded to Lo Liverpool the essential connection between speculati philosophy and practical politics.[1] The two sho poems that were suggested (we are told) by t Reform agitation are in a tone of moderate co servatism: he praises the freedom that slow broadens down from precedent to precedent; despises the "falsehood of extremes"; and just in Locksley Hall may be noticed a listening fe of mob rule, so in his poem Love thou thy Land, is a cautious Liberal, ready to do much for the peop but very little by the people—

> "But pamper not a hasty time,
> Nor feed with crude imaginings
> The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings,
> That every sophister can lime"—

and his abhorrence of precipitate politics comes out almost every allusion to France.

In his religious speculations he ponders over t question why God has created souls, knowing th they would sin and suffer, and finds it unanswera except in that firm hope of universal good as t outcome, which is the reasoned conclusion of th who find the design of human life in this world un telligible, unless another world is brought in to redr the balance, and which is thus the mainspring a support of belief in a future existence. There

[1] See a wonderful letter in *Lord Liverpool's Life*, vol. ii. p. 3

ssages in the letters written about this time to iss Emily Sellwood, during the long engagement at preceded their marriage, that indicate the bent his mind toward philosophic questions, with frenent signs of that half-conscious fellow-feeling with atural things, the "dim, mystic sympathies with ee and hill reaching far back into childhood," that nse of life in all sound and motion, whereby poetry drawn upward, by degrees and instinctively, into e region of the higher Pantheism. "Sculpture," e writes, "is particularly good for the mind; there a height and divine stillness about it which preaches eace to our stormy passions."[1] Nor has any English oet availed himself more skilfully of a language that rich in metaphors consisting of words that so far tain their primary neaning as to suggest a picture hile they convey a thought.

The preservation of the rough drafts and rejected ersions of passages and lines in poems of high finish, r the purpose of showing the artist at work, may not e altogether fair to him, and the practice in some cent editions of giving them in footnotes is rather stracting to those readers who enjoy a fine picture ithout asking how the colours are mixed. And hen each page of fine verse is also garnished with ferences, with minute explanations of the most miliar allusion, and with parallel quotations from her standard poets, the worried reader is painfully minded of his early school-books. Tennyson's oems have never yet been footnoted in this fashion, though no poet has corrected or revised more iligently; but the successive editions, which bear

[1] *Memoir.*

witness to his alterations, have been studiously com pared more than once. To students of method, t the fellow craftsman, and to the literary virtuos the variant readings may often be of substantia interest for the light they throw on the tendencie and predilections of taste which are the formativ influences upon style in prose or poetry. It is fro such materials that one can follow the processes o Tennyson's composition, the forming and maturin of his style, the fastidious discrimination whic dictated his rejection of any work that either di not throughout satisfy a high standard, or else marre a poem's symmetrical proportion by superfluity, ove weight, or the undue predominance of some note i the general harmony. One may regret that som fine stanzas or lines should have been thus expunge yet the impartial critic would probably confirm th decision in every instance. He acted, as we perceiv inexorably upon his rule that the artist is known b his self-limitation, feeling certain, as he once sai that "if I mean to make any mark in the world, must be by shortness, for the men before me had bee so diffuse." Only the concise and perfect work, h thought at this time, would last; and "hundreds verses were blown up the chimney with his pi smoke, or were written down and thrown into th fire as not being perfect enough."[1] Not many poem could have spared the four stanzas with which th "Dream of Fair Women" originally began, and whic E. FitzGerald quotes in an early letter as in Tennyson "best style, no fretful epithet, not a word too much It opens thus:—

[1] *Memoir.*

"As when a man that sails in a balloon,
Down-looking sees the solid shining ground
Stream from beneath him in the broad blue noon,
Tilth, hamlet, mead, and mound:

. . . . . .

So, lifted high, the poet at his will
Lets the great world flit from him, seeing all,
Higher, thro' secret splendours mounting still,
Self-poised, nor fears to fall."

et one can see that the simile is unnecessary, and to certain degree out of line with the general conception a vision that passes in the night. He would strike t stanzas because they made a poem too "long-cked"; and he resolutely condemned to excision om the original Palace of Art some excellent verses, erely to give the composition even balance, and trim the poem like a boat. This poem, in fact, as in a large part rewritten, for Tennyson evidently ought that too much brilliancy and opulence in the coration of his Palace might run into gorgeousness. e withdrew two or three such stanzas as this:—

"With piles of flavorous fruit in basket-twine
Of gold, upheaped, crushing down
Musk-scented blooms, all taste, grape, gourd, or pine
In bunch, or single grown."

nd this other stanza may have been omitted cause the didactic or scientific note is rather too ominent:—

"All nature widens upward. Evermore
The simpler essence lower lies,
More complex is more perfect, owning more
Discourse, more widely wise."

any rate, the preservation of these rejections (in the *emoir*) serves to illustrate the gradual development

of consummate technique; nor has it in this instance damaged the artist, for we may rank Tennyson among the very few poets whose reputation would rather gain than suffer by the posthumous appearance of pieces that the author had deliberately withheld or withdrawn.

From 1833 the publication of more poetry was suspended, though not the writing of it. In one of E. FitzGerald's letters (March 1842) we have the following passage:—

"Poor Tennyson has got home some of his proof-sheets, and now that his verses are in hard print, he thinks them detestable. There is much I had always told him of—his great fault of being too full and complicated—which he now sees, of fancies he sees, and wishes he had never been persuaded to print. But with all his faults, he will publish such a volume as has never been published since the time of Keats, and which, once published, will never be suffered to die. This is my prophesy, for I live before Posterity."

And indeed the fallow leisure of this period bore an ample harvest; for after an interval of ten years the full growth and range of his genius came out in the two volumes of 1842. The first of these contained a selection from the poems of 1830, with others, much altered, which had appeared in 1832, and several new pieces. In the second volume all was entirely new except three stanzas of "The Day Dream."

"This decade," writes his biographer, "wrought a marvellous abatement of my father's real fault—the tendency, arising from the fulness of mind which had not yet learned to master its resources freely, to overcrowd his compositions with imagery to which may be added over-indulgence in the luxury of the senses."[1]

The criticism is just, for these new poems di

[1] *Memoir.*

doubtedly attest the poet's rapid development of nd and methods, the expansion of his range of ought, his increasing command over the musical trument, and the admirable vigour and beauty t his composition was now disclosing. He had e singular advantage, rarely enjoyed so early in poetic career, of being surrounded by enthusiastic ends who were also very competent judges of his rk, whose unanimous verdict must have given his art real confidence; so that the few spurts of cold ter thrown on him by professional reviewers no ger troubled him seriously. The darts of such emies might hardly reach or wound one round om such men as Hallam, James Spedding, Edward tzGerald, the two Lushingtons, Blakesley, and Julius are rallied eagerly. Wordsworth, who at first had en slow to appreciate, having afterwards listened to o poems recited by Aubrey de Vere, did "acknowlge that they were very noble in thought, with a tion singularly stately." Even Carlyle, who had plored the poet to stick to prose, was vanquished, d wrote (1842) a letter so vividly characteristic as to stify, or excuse, another quotation from the *Memoir*:—

'Dear Tennyson,—Wherever this find you, may it find l well, may it come as a friendly greeting to you. I have t been reading your Poems; I have read certain of them er again, and mean to read them over and over till they come my poems; this fact, with the inferences that lie in it, of such emphasis in *me*, I cannot keep it to myself, but must eds acquaint you too with it. If you knew what my relation s been to the thing call'd English 'Poetry' for many years ck, you would think such fact almost surprising! Truly s long since in any English Book, Poetry or Prose, I have t the pulse of a real man's heart as I do in this same.

. . . . . .

"I know you cannot read German: the more interesting it to trace in your 'Summer Oak' a beautiful kindred to som thing that is best in Goethe; I mean his 'Müllerinn' (Mille daughter) chiefly, with whom the very Mill-dam gets in lov tho' she proves a flirt after all and the thing ends satirical lines! Very strangely too in the 'Vision of Sin' am reminded of my friend Jean Paul. This is not babb it is speech; true deposition of a volunteer witness. A so I say let us all rejoice somewhat. And so let us all smi rhythmically, all in concert, 'the sounding furrows'; and s forward with new cheer, 'beyond the sunset,' whither we a bound."

The allusion at the end of his letter is, of cours to Tennyson's Ulysses, which Carlyle quoted aga (1843) in *Past and Present.* He is recalling the co cluding lines of this grand monologue, where the o warrior, who embodies the spirit of heroic adventu in the primitive world, and whose manhood has be spent in twenty years' war and travel, breaks aw from the monotonous inactivity of life on a sm island, and fares forth again as a sea-rover. T Odyssey and the Iliad are the unsurpassed models all true epical narrative; the poet chooses certa incidents and actions that bring out character, th unite to frame a coherent picture of men and th times; and when the plot has been worked o to its *dénouement,* the story in each poem, as al in Milton's Paradise Lost, drops naturally to quiet ending; to go further would have been breach of the poem's unity. Yet the stamp character is so firmly set upon Ulysses that the mi of man has never since been content with leavi him to a home-keeping old age in Ithaca; and o would almost as soon believe that Napoleon mig

ve settled down placidly in Elba or St. Helena. ante takes up, in the spirit of the age that produced arco Polo, the post-Homeric legend of Ulysses sailing om Circe's island, near Gaeta, out of the Mediter- nean westward into the "unpeopled world" of the lantic Ocean, impelled by an ardent desire to plore the unseen and unknown.[1] On the other hand, nnyson's hero has reached home, and has given family e a fair trial, but he finds it so dull that he is soon iven by sheer *ennui* to his ship, purposing to sail yond the sunset and return no more. He exhorts s old comrades, as in Dante, to follow knowledge d make the most of the short life remaining to them . As a point of minor criticism, it may here be ticed that in taking Ithaca instead of Circe's island the place of departure on this final voyage, the glish poet may have forgotten that before the omeric Ulysses landed in Ithaca, a solitary man, ery one of his companions with whom he left Troy d perished by sea or land during the long wandering. t fidelity to the original tradition is of no account a poem that is independent of time and place. Our et may have felt that he was touching a chord in e heart of the restless Englishman, who is seldom ntent with leisurely ease after many years of working d wandering abroad—

This legend is partly confirmed, in a curious way, by care- recent investigations into the Mediterranean geography of Odyssey, which have located, with much probability, the nd of Calypso, the daughter of *Atlas*, on the north-west st of Africa, near the Strait of Gibraltar. It is noticed, ong other indications, that Calypso enjoined Ulysses to keep north star always on his left in sailing back toward Ithaca, l that he followed this eastward course for eighteen days.

> "The long mechanic pacings to and fro,
> The set gray life, and apathetic end,"

are not for men of this temper. Whether they ar chiefs of a petty Greek island, or citizens of a vas empire whose frontiers are constantly advancing, fo them it is true that

> "All experience is an arch wherethro'
> Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move;"

and Ulysses is the primeval type of the indefatigabl rover for whom the Juventus Mundi provided un limited regions of adventure, but whose occupatio will soon be gone when the uttermost corners of th earth shall have been explored. Ancient myth mediæval epic, popular ballads, retain and hand dow the figures of such men, as they were stamped on th imagination of the times; and Tennyson's poem giv us the persistent character, blended with and accorde to modern feelings.

Ulysses is perhaps the finest, in purity of con position and in the drawing of character, amon Tennyson's dramatic monologues. Of his oth classical studies, Tithonus is one of the most beautif conceptions of the mythologic Greek mind reset harmonious verse—a fable that may be interprete variously; whether of the desolate sadness that woul be the penalty of surviving, the mere relic of a ma into a strange and distant generation—

> "A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream,"

or as a parable upon the melancholy futility an disappointment that may follow the coupling blooming youth with extreme old age.

"How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet."[1]

the other hand, it is "the passionless bride, divine
nquillity," whom Tennyson's Lucretius, wrestling
h the satyr, vainly woos on earth, preferring at
t to seek her by death in the high Roman fashion,
l trusting that

"My golden work in which I told a truth
That stays the rolling Ixionian wheel,
And numbs the Fury's ringlet-snake, and plucks
The mortal soul from out immortal hell,
Shall stand,"

assuredly it has stood and will endure. In these
matic studies from the antique the single Roman
ure is Lucretius, the only Latin poet who boldly
ppled with those profound religious and philoso-
ical enigmas that were always perplexing Tennyson's
ditations, and whose conclusions must have been no
s deeply interesting to him because they were so
ferent from his own.

The march of blank verse, flowing onward with its
horous rhythm, is well suited to these monologues.
nnyson, who believed that "Keats, with his high
ritual vision, would have been had he lived,
e greatest of us all,"[2] observed also that his
nk verse lacked originality of movement. It

Compare the Spanish epigram on a rainy dawn—

"Quando sale la Aurora
Sale llorada,
Pobrecita, que noche
Habra pasada!"

[2] *Memoir.*

is true that Keats, who died before his metri
skill could be perfected, followed evidently
Miltonic construction; nevertheless, he stands in
foremost rank, if not first, among the nineteen
century poets who may be said to have refresl
blank verse by a new exhibition of its resources
varied harmonies. And we may recognise an affini
in cadence and rich colouring, between the first part
Hyperion and Tennyson's compositions in the sa
metre, whenever he takes for his theme some leg
of antiquity. We may reckon, moreover, Keats
Tennyson's forerunner in the romantic handling
classic subjects, with a fanciful freedom not restrai
by the scholarship that kept Tennyson closer to
models, and made him aim at preserving more clos
the thought, to the extent of occasionally reproduc
the very form and translating the language, of
Greek originals.[1] Both poets had the gift of inte
susceptibility to the beauties of Nature, and with b
of them the primitive myths were coloured by
magic of romance. But Tennyson's art shows m
plainly the influence of a time that delights in t
precision of details which the eighteenth-cent
poetry had avoided, preferring elegant generali
and elevated sentiments in polished verse. His w
is essentially picturesque, in the sense that he co
use words as the painter uses his brush for convey
the impression of a scene's true outline and colour;
can venture upon accurate description. The subjoi
fragment, written on revisiting Mablethorpe, conta
the quintessence of his descriptive style; the last th
lines are sheer landscape painting.

[1] "Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy."

"Here often when a child I lay reclined:
I took delight in this fair strand and free;
Here stood the infant Ilion of the mind,
And here the Grecian ships all seem'd to be.
And here again I come, and only find
The drain-cut level of the marshy lea,
Gray sand-banks, and pale sunsets, dreary wind,
Dim shores, dense rains, and heavy-clouded sea."

So also in the Palace of Art the desolate soul is ikened to

"A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand;
Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white."

Here every word is like a stroke of the painter's brush, but in to complete the sketch and to round off the impression; and this, as has been already observed, is characteristic of all Tennyson's workmanship; he does not give the effect of the scene, but the scene itself. For the different method of conveying to the mind's eye the scene through its effect, we may compare

"In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage."

In the volumes of 1842 one remarkable feature of the new poems is the diversity of subjects and *motifs*. The second volume opens with the Morte d'Arthur, wherein Tennyson first tried his art upon the legends that are to be gathered upon the shores of old romance, enlarging the picture, and filling up his canvas with a profusion of exquisite detail, the sights and the sounds, the figures of the king and his

knights, the ruined shrine, the lake in the full moo
the clanging of Sir Bedivere's armour, the ripp
of the water on the bank. The earliest roman
had none of this ornament; they relied on t
energetic simplicity with which a bard might rela
what was said and done in some tragic emergenc
their interest centred in the acts and incidents; th
had little care for the descriptive setting of th
narratives in landscape or supplementary decoratio
their religion was miraculous and almost wholly
ternal. Tennyson retains the dramatic situati
and treats it in a manner that satisfies the mode
sensibility to deeper thoughts and suggestions,
the magic of scenery, to that delight in bygo
things which is the true romantic feeling in
age when enchanted swords and fairy queens are
longer marvellous realities, and can only be preserv
for poetic use as mystic visions. Arthur and
knights have fallen in their last battle; but
Round Table was "an image of the mighty world"
which the old order changes, giving place to ne
they have lived their time and done their work; a
so the legendary king vanishes, uncertain whither
may be going, into some restful Elysium.

One feature of the collection in this volume is
variety of subject and character. After the Mo
d'Arthur, the last scene of a lost epic, come t
rustic pastorals of the present day, The Garden
Daughter and Dora; the latter remarkable for
pathetic simplicity, without one superfluous epit
or streak of colour, insomuch that Wordsworth
recorded to have thus spoken of it—"Mr. Ten
son, I have been endeavouring all my life to wr

pastoral like your Dora, and have not succeeded." nd FitzGerald wrote that as an eclogue it came ear the Book of Ruth. Wordsworth's pastorals, hough of the highest quality, are constructed ifferently from Tennyson's; he tells a plain story r more often relates an incident, for the purpose f bringing out some single note of human feeling, he touch of nature that makes us all akin, and pon this he moralises reflectively. Next after Dora ollow three sketches of quiet strolling through English elds, Audley Court, Walking to the Mail, and Edwin Morris. The mail comes in sight, "as quaint a four-n-hand as you shall see—three piebalds and a roan." Ve start with Edwin Morris and his friend by the ake, to hear

> "The soft wind blowing over meadowy holms
>
> . . . . . .
>
> While the prime swallow dips his wing, or then
> While the gold-lily blows, and overhead
> The light cloud smoulders on the summer crag."

ll these poems lap us in the caressing air of rural England at its best. Turn the page, and before us St. Simeon Stylites, the type of wild Oriental sceticism, praying from the top of his pillar amid ain, wind, and frost; "from scalp to sole one slough nd crust of sin,"

> "Battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer."

The poet has leapt back out of English fields into the Egyptian desert. From this picture of suicidal misery nd fierce mortification of the senses we pass abruptly o the idyllic love poem of the Talking Oak in an old

English park; and the next leap is again still furth
backward into the primitive world of Ulysses, t
hard-headed fighting man,

> ". . . . . strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

With this note of heroic character in the foretin
struck by the concluding lines of Ulysses we again tu
over a leaf, and are confronted in Locksley Hall by t
irresolute figure of modern youth, depressed and b
wildered by his own inability to face the bustli
competition of ordinary English life, disappointed
love, denouncing a shallow-hearted cousin, and nursi
a momentary impulse to

> ". . . . . wander far away,
> On from island unto island at the gateways of the day."

Restlessness, *ennui*, impatience of humdrum existen
set him dreaming of something like a new Odysse
But the hero of Locksley Hall is no Ulysses; t
bonds of culture and comfort are too strong for hi
the project of wild adventure is abandoned as quickly
it is formed; he remains to console himself with t
march of mind and the wonders of scientific discove
The contrast of ancient and modern character and c
cumstance was probably unintentional; but in notici
it we may take into account that while the Englishm
had been crossed in love, the Ithacan had been rema
ably successful with Circe and Calypso, and appears
have been always well treated by women, who m
be overcome, like the rest of the world, by stalwa
perseverance. The great and lasting success
Locksley Hall shows the power of genius in presenti

ı ordinary situation poetically; how it can kindle ɔ and transform common emotions, dealing boldly ith the facts and feelings of everyday life. As a mposition it has great original merit: the even ırrent of blank verse is put aside for a swinging etre, new in English poetry, with rhymed couplets, ssionate and picturesque, which follow one another ke waves; each of them running directly to its oint; and the long nervous lines sustain the rise and ll of varying moods. They stand now almost exactly they were written originally, with one correction ıat greatly improved what is now a singularly owerful line.[1]

That a poem which is steeped in the quintessence of odern sentiment—an invective in Rousseau's vein gainst a corrupt society—should be connected by igin with the early poetry of the Arabian desert, is notable example of the permanence and transmission forms. We know from the *Memoir* that Tennyson ok his idea (he said) of Locksley Hall from the *Moallakât*, the Suspended poems, composed by Arab ırds in or about the seventh century of our era, and ıng up in the Temple at Mecca. They are on different ıemes, but all of them begin with what is called the *usîb*, a melancholy reflection on deserted dwellings or ımping-grounds, that once were the scene of love and olen meetings. Here we have the opening prelude of ocksley Hall; and in the first of the seven poems to be found the allusion to the Pleiades with its etaphor; while other resemblances can be traced in

[1] "Let the peoples spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change" 842) altered to

"Let the *great world* spin for ever," etc.

the mother's worldly counsel to her daughter, and i
the ending of both pieces with a storm.[1]

One might almost regard The Two Voices as co
tinuing in a deeper philosophic key the melanchol
musing of Locksley Hall, and the two poems migh
then be labelled "Dejection." There is a similar di
consolate protest against the vanity and emptiness
life; there is the feeling of doubt and disillusion, th
sombre self-examination; and that same vague longin
for the battlefield as a remedy for the morbid sensibilit
that haunts so many studious men, which reappea
later in Maud. And the poem ends like In Memorian
with a revival of faith and hope under the influenc
of calm natural beauty, of household affections, an
the placid ways of ordinary humanity. It is a soothin
doctrine, and a wholesome medicine for the moodine
and ailments, the weariness of mere brainwork, th
occasionally disturb a sequestered and uneventf
existence; though it would hardly minister to mo

[1] These parallels have been pointed out to me by Sir Charl
Lyall, to whom all Arabic poetry is familiar, and whose ov
version of the couplet on the Pleiades is here placed side b
side with Tennyson's stanza, for a comparison that is by n
means to the disadvantage of the Arabian. It may be observe
that the metrical arrangement of the original Arabic verse, b
which each long line is composed of two hemistichs, giving
pause in the middle, and each couplet is complete in itself,
not unlike the movement of the English verse, and may ha
suggested it.

Tennyson.

"Many a night I saw the Pleiades, rising through the mellow shad
Glitter like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid."

Imra-al-Kais.

"What time in the Eastern heavens the Pleiades clomb the sky
Like the jewelled clasps of a girdle aslant on a woman's waist."

erilous mental diseases, or relieve the perplexities of amlet. One stanza in The Two Voices—

> "'Consider well,' the voice replied,
> 'His face, that two hours since hath died;
> Wilt thou find passion, pain or pride?'"

calls the masculine attitude of an age which, though ferior in poetic imagination, was perhaps for that ery reason less troubled by thick-coming fancies—

> "A soul supreme in each hard instance tried,
> Above all pain, all passion, and all pride,
> The rage of power, the blast of public breath,
> The lust of lucre and the dread of death."[1]

nd it is certainly refreshing, when two or three more ages of Tennyson's volume are turned, to find the pirit of undaunted faith and courage revived in the fty stanzas of Sir Galahad, where the rhymes ring ear like strokes on a bell—a piece of consummate orkmanship. We may compare the somewhat abject rostration of Stylites with the vigorous championship his faith by the knight-errant—

> "My good blade carves the casques of men,
> My tough lance thrusteth sure;
> My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure."

e stands here as a model of that purity and trustful ety which belong to the later conceptions of chivalry, hen tales of enchantment were intermixed with the hristian mysteries. In the fragment of Lancelot nd Guinevere we have the tone of the Renaissance, picture of the courteous knight and his lady love t in a framework of brilliant English scenery, as they de through the woods in the springtide of the year.

[1] Pope's "Epistle to the Earl of Oxford."

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCESS AND IN MEMORIAM

FROM 1842 to 1845 the sojourning of Tennyson i various parts of England and Ireland can be trace from his letters, which mention, however, few person incidents, and allude rarely to public affairs. One these refers to a trial of the water cure at Cheltenham and in a letter of October 1844 to F. Tennyso Fitzgerald reports Alfred to be still there, "whe he has been sojourning for two months, but he nev writes me a word. Hydropathy has done its wors he writes the names of his friends in water." At th time he had been persuaded by one Dr. Allen to put a his capital into a project of turning out wood-carvi by machinery. By this whimsically rash investment lost his money, a very serious blow to his prospects marriage; and he fell ill with anxiety and vexation.[1]

In 1845 Mr. Hallam had drawn Sir Robert Pee attention to Tennyson's merits and slender mean when Peel offered a small grant of one sum, excusi his inability to provide more at that time; b Hallam treated this as inadequate. Soon afte

[1] FitzGerald writes (1845)—"Dr. Allen is dead; and A. T having a life insurance and policy on him, will now, I hop retrieve the greater part of his fortune again. Apollo certain did this; shooting one of his swift arrows straight at the hea of the doctor, whose perfectly heartless conduct certain upset A. T.'s nerves."

ards Carlyle's solemn warning to Monckton Milnes, no had already been moving in the matter, that s eternal salvation would depend at the Day Judgment on his ability to answer the question ny he did not get a pension for Alfred Tennyson, pears to have been effective, for in 1845 the nual grant of £200 was communicated to him by r Robert Peel as "a mark of royal favour to one no had devoted to worthy objects great intellectual wers." The minister was balancing the claims of eridan Knowles, who was aged and had done his rk, against the rising genius, when Milnes sent him Locksley Hall and Ulysses; and it was the ding of Ulysses by Milnes to Peel, we are told, at determined the recommendation, which was made thout any kind of direct or indirect solicitation m the poet. He wrote to a friend:—

"Something in that word 'pension' sticks in my gizzard; s only the name, and perhaps would 'smell sweeter' by e other. I feel the least bit possible Miss Martineauish ut it. You know she refused one, saying she 'should be bing the people, who did not make laws for themselves': rever, that is nonsense. . . . If the people *did* make laws themselves, if these things went by universal suffrage, t literary man ever would get a lift? it being notorious the mass of Englishmen have as much notion of poetry as fox-hunting."[1]

rein, it may be observed, Tennyson does scant ice to the taste and to the generosity of the glish people, who are at least as widely sensitive to poetry as any other modern nation, which is bably one reason why England has produced so ch of it. Nor has an original genius, of strength

[1] *Memoir.*

and sincerity, ever had cause to fear the test
universal suffrage, if his themes have been, as wi
a great poet they always are, of a kind that are larg
and deep enough to touch all sorts and conditions
men: since no other art can compare with poetry at t
highest level for its power of winning popularity. A
this is the more remarkable when we remember th
the poet of modern nations uses the language of a va
miscellaneous multitude, with complex tastes and
diverse conditions of life; whereas the masters
antique poetry had for their audience some co
paratively small community, or a group of pet
states and cities allied to them by kinship, in mi
and manners alike, by whom the note, when sounde
was sure to be caught up. And so they were fortuna
at first in "leaving great verse unto a little cla
to be preserved and handed down afterwards as t
inheritance of all civilised peoples.

It was part of Tennyson's dubitating temperame
that he planned out his foreign travels with interi
misgivings, and with much wavering as to purpo
and direction. FitzGerald writes (1845) that the po
"has been for six weeks intending to start every d
for Switzerland or Cornwall, he does not know which
and in 1846 we read again that he has been "for t
weeks striving to spread his wings to Italy or Switz
land. It has ended in his flying to the Isle of Wig
for autumn." However, in August of that year
did cross the sea to Ostend; and his journal of a to
through Belgium and up the Rhine into Switzerla
gives jotted impressions of travel, marking his rou
and mainly recording his discomforts. He was knock
out of bed one morning at four o'clock to look

ont Blanc without the cloudy night-cap; "the glance gave him did not by any means repay me for the ouble of travelling to see him," including, we may ppose, his disgust at the "infernal clatter of innumerle apes" in a Swiss hotel. Next year he was under rdropathic treatment in England, so much occupied th his poems that he suspended correspondence with iends and relations, wherefore the personal chronicle this time is scantier than ever. He had been long editating upon a social question that had been ilosophically discussed since Rousseau's day, had en touched upon by Bentham and James Mill, but d never yet come within the sphere of practical nglish politics; and the outcome, in 1847, was his em of The Princess.

Here is a romantic tale, with the Idea of a Female niversity for its theme and plot, and for its moral e sure triumph of the natural affections over any minine attempt to ignore them, or to work out omen's independence by a kind of revolt from the tablished intellectual dominion of man. The incess repudiates a contract of marriage with a ince to whom she has been betrothed in childod, purposing to devote herself to the higher ucation of her own sex, in order that they may mentally prepared to insist upon liberty and uality. But the Prince, with two comrades, puts women's clothing; and they enter themselves as udents in a college that admits women only within bounds; they are speedily detected, as was obvisly inevitable; and the contrabandists are scornfully pelled, as they fully deserved to be. The Prince's ther declares war upon the father of the Princess

to enforce the marriage contract; but it is agre
to settle the quarrel by a combat of fifty pick
warriors on either side; when the Prince is beat
down in the lists, and all the College is turned into
hospital for the wounded men, most of the girl gradua
being judiciously ordered home. The Princess rema
to nurse the defeated Prince and to read poetry by
bedside, with the natural consequence that in tendi
him she is drawn to love him, abandons her Universi
and marries her betrothed.

It is a beautiful serio-comic love-story, that has be
treated over-seriously not only by those who disl
playing with a subject which is for them a mat
of hard and earnest argument, but also by oth
to whom the poem is "the herald melody of t
higher education of women." The logical conclusi
from the *dénouement* is that matrimony is better
women than a life exclusively devoted to the sup
intendence of a sort of nunnery, in which girls are
be trained and fitted to cast off the yoke of me
pretentious superiority. Nor indeed was the colle
projected by the Princess as an alternative or antid
to marriage, but only in order that, if afterwa
they chose to wed, they might do so on equal ter
of intellectual companionship. A solid project
educational reform is surrounded with fantastic c
cumstances of romantic adventure, and is made
groundwork of some very fine poetry; while
substitution of women instead of men everywhere
the framework of college life and discipline gi
ample room for artistic sketches of novel situati
and costumes. The underlying social philosophy
as usual, moderate and sensible: the supremacy

ve is temperately asserted; the true value of the em is rightly made to consist in its decorative auty, in some delicate delineations of characters, verse of sustained musical effect, and in a few quisite lyrics that vary the unrhymed metre. The nder melancholy of a feeling that life may be passing thout love, of vague regrets and longings, has never en more sympathetically expressed than in the song Tears, idle Tears, with its refrain of the days at are no more, and the shadow of mortal darkness eady falling over the season of youth:—

> "Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
> The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
> To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
> The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
> So sad, so strange, the days that are no more."

w know, Tennyson said long afterwards to his son,[1] at this is a blank verse lyric; and perhaps there is better example of a metrical arrangement of words o musical passages, divided into stanzas by the re-rring cadence of each final line. Another song, The lendour falls on Castle Walls, charms the ear, on e other hand, by harmonious assonance and dwelling long-drawn rhymes. But Home they brought their arrior Dead, in which (to quote Charles Kingsley) he sight of the fallen hero's child opens the ices of the widow's tears," is the one piece that ght have been written by an inferior songster, and has earned popularity by touching a somewhat dinary and facile note of pathos. It resembles too arly an affecting anecdote. The amorous strain

[1] *Memoir.*

running through the whole poem indicates the unde current of natural passion which is sapping the whc edifice of female independence and self-reliance th the Princess has undertaken to build up on the bas of intellectual emancipation; while the hard lesse that all the refinements of cultured civilisation a powerless when confronted by the primitive appeal force, is taught by the eventual dissolution of t University amid the clash of arms. It must be a mitted that the Princess brought this catastrophe up herself by the very drastic ordinance which decre death to any man found within the walls of her colle —a characteristic sample, though it may not have be so intended, of the quick resentment, the propensi toward short and sharp measures with offenders a enemies, that may be observed whenever women ha risen to supreme rulership in troubled times. And t fact that all the illustrious types of feminine superiori cited by the Princess in her discourses, or by the La Ida in her professorial address—from the legenda Amazon down to Joan of Arc—are women renowned war, might possibly be taken as the poet's subtle i sinuation of female inconsistency. For the whole a and educational policy of the College, if it was design to promote equality between the sexes, should ha been to denounce and depreciate the profession arms, because that is the immovable corner-stone masculine superiority.

The poem was materially altered and partly r modelled in the four editions that followed its fir issue; and a line was inserted to show, as the *Mem* tells us, that Tennyson "certainly did not mean kill any one in the tournament"; though this casts

de of unreality over his description of a fierce en-
nter with sharp steel. Some passages in which the
nful invectives of the Princess border too nearly
n scolding,[1] are also judiciously struck out; and
of the songs were introduced in 1850. In regard
the metaphors and illustrative comparisons that
und throughout the narrative, we may notice how
point in a simile brings in a picture, after the
neric fashion—

> "She read, till over brow
> And cheek and bosom brake the wrathful bloom
> As of some fire against a stormy cloud,
> When the wild peasant rights himself, the rick
> Flames, and his anger reddens in the heavens."

e we have a reminiscence of rick-burning to
strate a hot cheek; and one can see that the
t's mind was continually seizing, retaining, and
ing into words the impressions of sight and
ring, even if he had not told us of his method.

> There was a period in my life (he wrote in a letter) when,
> n artist, Turner, for instance, takes rough sketches of
> scape, etc., in order to work them eventually into some
> t picture, so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or
> words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque
> Nature. I never put these down, and many and many a
> has gone away on the north wind, but some remain."[2]

proceeds to give specimens; and he further remarks,
t truly, that he might easily have borrowed from
energetic language of the people expressions and

[1] "Go help the half-brained dwarf, Society,
To find low motives unto noble deeds."

. . . . . .

Go, fitter far for narrower neighbourhoods,
Old talker, haunt where gossip breeds and seethes.

[2] *Memoir.*

images which the critics would have credited to th effort of original creative fancy, but would have co demned as unreal and non-natural. For the vernacul speech takes its lights and shades directly from thin visible;[1] and in its metaphors one can detect a su vival of the primitive animism, as in Tennyson instance of an old fishwife, who had lost two sons sea, crying to the advancing tide—

"Ay, roar, do, how I hates to see thee show thy white teeth!

When the popular superstition becomes a litera device, it is quite possible to abuse the poetic licen that invests senseless things with a kind of huma passion, as in Kingsley's verse of "the cruel crawlin foam." But Tennyson never overcharged his met phors in this way; and it is certain that in langua what is true, what has been actually said, is oft quite as strong as what has been imagined, and th no more powerful words can be deliberately invent than those which can be suddenly wrung out of man by mortal danger or some violent emotion.

During the years 1846-50 Tennyson lived mostly Cheltenham, making excursions to Cornwall and Scotland, where he traversed the classic ground Burns's poetry. It may be worth while to quote he a passage from the "Euphranor" of E. FitzGeral where, in mentioning Tennyson's emotion on seei "the banks and braes of bonnie Doon," he is led on some striking and very sympathetic recollections his friend.

[1] *E.g.*—

"He shall never darken my door."

[2] *Memoir.*

. . The only living, and like to live, Poet I had known, so many years after, he found himself beside that ie Doon,' and—whether it were from recollection of poor , or of 'the days that are no more' which haunt us all, w not—I think he did not know—but, he somehow e,' as he told me, 'broke into a passion of tears.' Of tears, during a long and pretty intimate intercourse, I had seen glisten in his eye but once, when reading Virgil—old Virgil,' as he called him—together: and then of the ng of Troy in the second Æneid—whether moved by the rophe's self, or the majesty of the verse it is told in—or, fore, scarce knowing why. For, as King Arthur shall witness, no young Edwin he, though, as a great Poet, ehending all the softer stops of human Emotion in that er where the Intellectual, no less than what is called the al, faculty predominated. As all who knew him know, at all points, Euphranor—like young Digby, of grand ction and feature, significant of that inward Chivalry, ing his ancient and honourable race; when himself a gé Squire,' like him in Chaucer, 'of grete strength,' that hurl the crowbar further than any of the neighbouring s, whose humours, as well as of their betters—Knight, e, Landlord, and Land-tenant—he took quiet note of, like er himself."

other journey was to Ireland, where the echoes of rney inspired the bugle song in The Princess. *Memoir* tells us that he saw much of Thackeray arlyle, among other notables. He loved Catullus poet whose form and feeling, the sweetness verse and his enjoyment of reposeful rusticity, an affinity between two cultured civilisations re separated by a long interval of time, though ntrast of morals is often wide enough. It was not ackeray's town-bred nature to rate the Roman yet we find him writing a handsome apology for ; said in his haste, when Tennyson quoted to

him Catullus, that he could do better himself. Carly "had opened the gates of his Valhalla to let Alfr in," and evidently enjoyed high discourse with hi Between two such men there were necessarily freque argumentative collisions, their minds were predispos by training and temperament to divergent views, a their intellectual perspective was by no means t same. Carlyle saw the follies and iniquities of t world through a lurid magnifying glass; he prophesi ruin like an ancient seer, and called down the wrath God upon knaves and idiots; while Tennyson's i clination was towards indulgence of human frailty, a hope in the slow betterment of the world. Violence i word or deed was to him antipathetic; and one ma guess that he preferred to study heroes in their quiet moods, in some such fits of musing as those whic Shakespeare interjects among scenes of furious actio He might have given us Cromwell reflecting in soliloquy upon the burden of solitary rulership, sur rounded by fanatics and conspirators. An extract fro his conversations with Mrs. Rundle Charles indicat one point of what Tennyson thought about Carly "You would like him for one day, but get tired of hi so vehement and destructive"; the fastidious po must have found in him too much sound and fury, a may possibly have doubted whether it signified an thing. FitzGerald says in one of his letters (1846)-

"I met Carlyle last night at Tennyson's, and they two d cussed the merits of this world and the next, till I wish myself out of *this*, at any rate. Carlyle gets more wi savage, and unreasonable every day, and I do believe w turn mad."

Tennyson preferred the Odyssey to the Ilia

le, who liked fierce heroes, and had no objection
istorian to stern cruelty, though a little personal
nfort was intolerable to him, would probably have
the other side; but on the subject of tobacco they
at any rate of one mind, and on all questions they
ted with amicable vigour. Later on Carlyle, at
moment when he was more than usually sour
rusty, described the poet as sitting on a dunghill
innumerable dead dogs; meaning, as one may
no more than impatience with a man of rare
ect who seemed to him to sit dreaming on the
s of old romance while the State of England was
with shams and mouldy with whited sepulchres.
Carlyle afterwards confessed that "his own
ption was not luminous"; and though he cared
for verse, yet he could quote Tears, idle Tears,
e spirit of the ballad of The Revenge, was quite
when The Grandmother was read to him, and
owards his life's end that Alfred always from the
ning took the right side of every question.[1] About
me time FitzGerald writes of Tennyson: "He is
me magnanimous, kindly, delightful fellow as ever;
ng by far the finest prose sayings of any one."

will be recollected that Arthur Hallam died at
a in 1833. Some of the sections of Tennyson's
mental elegy upon his friend were written
oon afterwards; and their number had rapidly
sed by 1841, when Edmund Lushington first
e collection and heard the poet recite some of
It must have been not far from completion in
since in that year Lushington was shown the

[1] *Memoir.*

stanzas upon his marriage with Tennyson's young
sister Cecilia, with which the poem is now conclude
Eight editions, all of them containing successive ad
tions and alterations, followed the first publicati
of In Memoriam in 1850, which may accordingly
taken as the outcome of seventeen years' meditati
composition. Of all Tennyson's continuous poems
is the longest and the most elaborate; it affect
profoundly the minds of the generation among wh
it appeared; it embodies the writer's philosophy up
the ever-present subject of life and death, upon
the problems suggested by the mutability of t
world's face and forms, and on the questions wheth
human mortality may not fall within the scope of t
universal natural law, whether faith in things spiritu
is a true intuition, or no more than a hopeful conjectu
than a painting of

> "the shadows that are beneath
> The wide winding caves of the peopled tomb."[1]

The poet, like Bunyan's pilgrim, forces his way throu
the slough of despond, passes the caverns of Dou
and Despair, and emerges finally into resignati
with trust in the Unseen Power that is guiding
creation to some far-off divine event. In this no
poem — on the whole Tennyson's masterpiece —
natural things that catch his eye or ear remind hi
by contrast or sympathy, of his bereavement, a
interpret his personal emotion. Many of us kn
how the whole world seems changed and discolou
by some calamitous shock; and here the vivid se
bility of the poet reflects and illustrates this state
mind by figures, emblems, and solemn meditatio

[1] *Shelley.*

s impelled by his own passionate grief to dwell the contrast between irremediable human suffer- nd the calm aspect of inanimate Nature, between hort and sorrowful days of man and the long ssion of ages. From the misgivings and per- ties, the tendency to lose heart, engendered by se of being environed by forces that are blind relentless, he finds his ultimate escape in the ction that God and Nature cannot be at strife, friends will meet and know each other again fter, and that somehow good will be the final of ill. His sure and never-failing mastery of c diction, gained by practice and severe dis- e, carries him through this long monotone with gh and even flight; the four lines are fitted each stanza without flaws, in singular harmony; sections are complete in writing, measure, and ce.

chapter in the *Memoir* contains matter of higher aphical interest than that which is headed "In oriam." A letter from the late Henry Sidgwick, e clear and intrepid spirit never flinched before ectual doubts or vague forebodings, describes mpression produced on him and on others of ime by this poem, showing how it struck in, so eak, upon their religious debates at a moment of cting tendencies and great uncertainty of direc- giving intensity of expression to the dominant g and wider range to the prevailing thought.

he most important influence of 'In Memoriam' on my ht, apart from its poetic charm as an expression of al emotion, opened in a region, if I may so say, deeper than the difference between Theism and Christianity:

it lay in the unparalleled combination of intensity of fee with comprehensiveness of view and balance of judgm shown in presenting the *deepest* needs and perplexitie humanity. And this influence, I find, has increased ra than diminished as years have gone on, and as the great is between Agnostic Science and Faith have become contin more prominent. In the sixties I should say that these de issues were somewhat obscured by the discussions on Chris dogma, and Inspiration of Scripture, etc. . . . During t years we were absorbed in struggling for freedom of tho in the trammels of a historical religion ; and perhaps wha sympathized with most in 'In Memoriam' at this time, a from the personal feeling, was the defence of 'honest do the reconciliation of knowledge and faith in the introduc poem, and the hopeful trumpet-ring of the lines on the Year. . . . Well, the years pass, the struggle with Carlyle used to call 'Hebrew old clothes' is over, Freedo won, and what does Freedom bring us to ? It brings us to face with atheistic science ; the faith in God and Im tality, which we had been struggling to clear from superst suddenly seems to be *in the air* ; and in seeking for a basis for this faith we find ourselves in the midst of the ' with death' which 'In Memoriam' so powerfully present

The whole letter, which is too long for quota here, may be read in the *Memoir* as a fair represe tion of the effect produced by In Memoriam u men of sincere and sensitive minds, who resolu confronted the inexorable facts of human existe yet were not content to treat the problems as soluble. And so the wide impression that was m by these exquisitely musical meditations may ascribed to their sympathetic affinity with peculiar spiritual aspirations and intellectual di mas of the time. Dogmatic theology, notwithstan the famous rallying movement at Oxford, had been losing ground ; liturgies and positive article

ion were out of credit; the proofs of Christianity
ational evidence brought religion upon the un-
urable ground of appeal to history and to questions
ct. Among average Englishmen a large number
willing to take morality as the chief test of
ious truth, were disposed to hold that its essen-
principles were best stated in the language of ethics.
Utilitarian philosophers undertook to provide
s with an experimental basis; and the researches
hysical science threw doubt upon the actuality of
e intervention in the course, or even the constitu-
of the world; they pointed to a system that was
anical, though not necessarily materialistic. Then
, with a reaction, the energetic protests of those
saw and felt that Religion, which is to the vast
rity of mankind a spiritual necessity, must not
d or fall by documentary evidence, must be placed
me region that is inaccessible to arguments from
utility, that is independent of and untouched by
bservation of phenomena or the computation of
abilities. Some endeavoured to show that the
lusions of Science could be reconciled with the
odox traditions; others, as Newman, declared that
was no conflict at all, that theology is the
est science, entirely above and unaffected by what
to be called natural philosophy; but Tennyson
that a serious conflict, a revolution of ideas, was
itable. All speculation, physical or metaphysical,
ecessarily affected by what we know of the world
live in; and the unrolling of the record of an
easurable past compels us to look with new
ngs on all that goes on around us. If we com-
Tennyson with Wordsworth we are at once

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aware of a marked difference in their treatment
Nature. Wordsworth dwells mainly upon her cal
majestic, and kindly aspect; she is the homely nu
who endeavours to content the immortal soul
imperial man with his humble abode on earth;
is beautiful and beneficent; she "lifts the spirit
a calmer height"; and although Wordsworth m
be occasionally touched by her insensibility to hum
sorrow, may be perplexed by finding her ways un
telligible, yet he discerns everywhere the interfus
of a divine spirit, the evidences of admirable arran
ment and design. For Tennyson also the exter
world was sublime and beautiful, soothing his regr
and suggesting resignation to the common lot;
the illimitable expansion of time and space laid o
by scientific discoveries, the record of waste
prodigality through countless ages, the disclosure
the processes of Nature, her impassive uniformi
her implacable regularity, took strong hold of
imaginative mind that was in communion with
thought and knowledge of the day. After Tennyso
death Huxley wrote that he was the only mod
poet, perhaps the only poet since Lucretius, w
had taken the trouble to understand the work
methods of men of science; though one may rem
that the two poets found their consolation in v
different conclusions. It now seemed to him t
the scientific men were laying claims to a domin
which might place in jeopardy not merely the for
outworks but the central dogma of Christiani
which is a belief in a future life, in the so
conscious immortality. Is man subject to the gene
law of unending mutability, and is he after all

highest and latest type, to be made and broken a million others, mere clay in the moulding ls that are darkly seen in the evolution of worlds? poet transfigured these obstinate questionings the vision of

> "an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep."

sks: Shall man

> "Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
> Who battled for the True, the Just,
> Be blown about the desert dust,
> Or seal'd within the iron hills?"

he was haunted by the misgiving that man also t be no more than other atoms in the ever-ging universe, that prayer is fruitless, that death be stronger than love, and that Nature gives ntimations of conscious survival. Nevertheless face, as he sees it, is so fair that it brings him olation. The alternations of the seasons, the n and the sunshine, are reflected in his varying ls; the spring breezes carry a cheerful message, autumnal gales accord with the unrest of his ; a quiet sea turns his thoughts to the calm eath. He feels the immemorial touch of sadness e brief lifetime of flower and foliage, in the passing e long light summer days; yet beyond all these itory images he looks forward to the twilight of al day on the low, dark verge of human existence, e the mysteries of pain and sorrow will be under-l, and no more shadows will fall on the landscape e past. After long striving with doubts and fears,

after having "fought with death," he resolves that
cannot be "wholly brain, magnetic mockeries"—

> "Not only cunning casts in clay:
> Let Science prove we are, and then
> What matters Science unto men,
> At least to me? I would not stay."

After this manner Tennyson made his stand agai
the encroachments of Science upon the spiritual doma
though he refused to retreat, like some others, behi
dogmatic entrenchments, and trod under foot the terr
of Acheron. By tight-lacing creeds, to use Carly
phrase, he would not be bound; he believed firmly
some indissoluble relation between human destin
and a divine providence; he reckoned the strenu
instinct and universal anticipation of some future
to be presumptive evidence of a truth; and he
confident that friends would meet and know e
other hereafter. A poem which is a long epita
must naturally touch in this consolatory strain u
the visitations of sorrow and death; but it must a
remind us of the limitations, the inconclusiven
that are inseparable from the emotional treatment
enigmas that foil the deepest philosophies. And si
not every one can be satisfied with subjective fa
or lofty intuitions, it may be that the note of ala
and despondency sounded by In Memoriam start
more minds than were reassured by the poet's fi
conviction that all is well

> "tho' faith and form
> Be sunder'd in the night of fear."

If, therefore, the poem strengthened in many
determination to go onward trustfully, on the ot
hand there was an attitude of terror in the recoil fr

alistic paths that lead to an abyss; and perhaps be so far counted among the influences which combined to promote a retreat in the latter of the nineteenth century toward the shelter gmatic beliefs and an infallible authority in rs of religion. But whatever may have been tellectual influences of In Memoriam, we may that it enlarged the range of poetry by entering thetically upon the field of these fresh doubts ifficulties, and by showing how a mind that in turns naturally to religion may become absorbed ellectual problems. Wordsworth found content contemplation of Nature; Science he despised, uch questions as whether God and Nature are ife did not trouble his serene philosophy. son's meditations were turned toward the as of life by the stroke of grief; and he was ed, rightly, to fulfil the poet's mission, which is body the floating thought of his period. In very popular lines

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds."

ve an antithesis, a kind of paradox, that concisely ents the prevailing state of many minds to whom ific explorations brought increasing religious per- y, until they obtained repose in the conclusion essential truths lie somewhere beyond and are endent of all positive doctrines and formulas. little systems have their day"; we may believe we cannot verify, and Knowledge must have her as the younger child of Wisdom. The poet leads a cloudy height; and though it is not his business

to satisfy the strict philosophical enquirer, he offers all wandering souls a refuge in the faith

> " . . that comes of self-control,
> The truths that never can be proved
> Until we close with all we loved
> And all we flow from, soul in soul."

We know from the *Memoir* that Tennyson belie himself to be the originator of the metre of Memoriam, until after its appearance he was told t it might be found in Elizabethan poetry and e where.[1] Of the two specimens in Ben Jonson, one them, the elegy Underwood, has a certain resembla in movement and tone with Tennyson's shorter pie in the same metre, probably because in this form stanza carries naturally a certain dignity and sobri of feeling, and is well suited by its measured regula for compact and sententious expression. The in position of a couplet with a rhyme of its own betw the first and fourth line, stays the pace of the ve Yet the high pathetic vibrations of feeling in the fi passages of In Memoriam prove that in Tennys hands the instrument had acquired a wider ran while the main current of his meditations pa through so many varieties of impressions or aspect nature, the dim rainy morning, the short midsum night, the bitter wintry day, with moods correspond to these influences, that few will agree with Fitzgera objection to the poem as monotonous.

In a little volume published in 1866 under the t of *Tennysonia*, the writer, who is an ardent admire

[1] A complete list of the writers who had used the met given in the commentary on "In Memoriam" by Professo C. Bradley (1901).

poet, has been at the pains of pointing out, by llel quotations, certain coincidences of thought phrase between In Memoriam and Shakespeare's nets. Something of the kind is here and there tly traceable, and the "ruined woodlands" in nd might remind us of Shakespeare's likening the ess trees to "bare ruined choirs, where late the et birds sang." But in Shakespeare himself, as in other poets, similar reminiscences of this kind may liscovered, nor could they ever be rightly made an utation against any great writer. FitzGerald gives sound ruling on this subject in one of his letters—never speak of Plagiarism unless the Coincidence, Adoption, be something quite superior to the general erial of him in whom the 'parallel passage' is nd. And Shakespeare may have read the other old [Tusser] and remembered unconsciously, or never e read, and never remembered." The comparison *Tennysonia* proves at most, and apparently aims at more than proving, an inference that Tennyson's nory had assimilated the sonnets. And it is only real interest when it shows occasionally how the s and impressions, which are as much the common perty of all ages as the natural phenomena and nan sensitiveness that produce them, are set in new nes by the chief artists of each succeeding time; , to quote Tennyson, the thoughts of man are ened by the circling of the suns. The incessant le between sea and shore reminds Shakespeare that solid earth, and all that it contains, are shifting transitory; while Tennyson's reflection upon the nges of land and water takes the vast scale of logic periods—

"There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea."

The sonnets and In Memoriam have both for their subject the passionate attachment to a friend, living or dead; and each poet turns frequently to Nature for an image of his emotion or a response to it. It may be noticed, as a point of style, that whereas Shakespeare strikes off his image and fits it to his thought, in two or four lines,[1] the modern artist draws out a whole landscape, or accumulates picturesque touches—

"I find no place that does not breathe
Some gracious memory of my friend;

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,
Or low morass and whispering reed,
Or simple stile from mead to mead,
Or sheepwalk up the windy wold"—

prolonging the description through several stanzas. Both poets are profoundly impressed by Nature's warning to man that all her works are perishable; but while Tennyson is alarmed by the sense of mortality, yet finds hope in some future state beyond, Shakespeare, with his "indolent and kingly gaze" at human fears and follies, propounds no reassuring speculation. Hamlet's last words are that the rest is silence.

In 1836, when Charles Tennyson married Louisa Sellwood, her sister Emily had been one of the bridesmaids. To her Alfred Tennyson became soon

[1] "Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end."
—*Sonnet LX.*

wards engaged; but in 1840 the prospect of riage appeared so remote that correspondence een them was broken off, and ten years passed re the engagement was renewed. The wedding place at last in June 1850, at Shiplake Church on Thames, when the two became partners upon a slender capital, including the expectation of a lty on the published poems. They made a ney into western England, visiting Glastonbury Arthur Hallam's grave at Clevedon. A very rous offer from Mr. Monckton Milnes of permanent ters in a wing of his house at Fryston they would ccept; they took a house at Warninglid in Sussex, he first storm blew a hole through the wall, and departed hastily, to find at last a fixed habitation napel House, Twickenham. Their first child was , but died at birth, in April 1851, after which travelled into Italy, meeting the Brownings at as they returned homeward. Under the title The Daisy," Tennyson has commemorated this ney in stanzas of consummate metrical harmony, their beautiful anapæstic ripple in each final to be studied by all who would understand the titative value (not merely accentual) of English bles in rhythmic compositions—

> "But ere we reach'd the highest summit
> I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.
> It told of England then to me,
> And now it tells of Italy.
> O love, we two shall go no longer
> To lands of summer across the sea."

nnyson had at this time become the foremost of his day. His genius had been saluted by the

applause and admiration of his contemporaries, a was now under the glow of its meridian. In a co tribution to the *Life of William Morris*,[1] Canon Dixo writing of Oxford in 1851-53, says:—

"It is difficult to the present generation to understand Tennysonian enthusiasm which then prevailed both in Oxfo and in the world. All reading men were Tennysonians; sets of reading men talked poetry. Poetry was the thin and it was felt with justice that this was due to Tennys He had invented a new poetry, a new poetic English; his of words was new, and every piece that he wrote was a c quest of a new region. This lasted till Maud, in 1855, wh was his last poem that mattered."

This quotation, though one may demur to the fi words, shows Tennyson's position and the attracti of his poetry for the younger men; and his gene eminence had already been marked for public recog tion. In November 1850, after Wordsworth's dea the Laureateship was offered to Tennyson. Lord Jo Russell submitted to the Queen the four names Leigh Hunt, Sheridan Knowles, Henry Taylor, a last on the list, Tennyson. The Prince Conso admiration of In Memoriam determined Her Majest choice, which might seem easy enough to the verd of the present day. The subjoined extract from t Queen's Secretary is worth quoting, to show that t Laureate's duties were not intended to be burdenso and that the offer was made, as the letter ended saying, as a mark of Her Majesty's appreciation literary distinction—

"The ancient duties of this Office, which consisted in lau tory Odes to the Sovereign, have been long, as you are p bably aware, in abeyance, and have never been called

[1] By J. W. Mackail (1899).

ing the Reign of Her present Majesty. The Queen how-
r has been anxious that the Office should be maintained;
t on account of its antiquity, and secondly because it
ablishes a connection, through Her Household, between
r Majesty and the poets of this country as a body."[1]

To refuse Wordsworth's succession, proposed to him
such honourable terms, would have been difficult;
vertheless Tennyson hesitated until his acceptance
s determined by the right judgment of his friends.
s accession to office brought down upon him, among
ıer honoraria, "such shoals of poems that I am
nost crazed with them; the two hundred million
ets of Great Britain deluge me daily. Truly, the
ureateship is no sinecure."[2] For the inevitable
ée he was accommodated, not without disquietude
er the nether garment, with the loan of a Court suit
m his ancient brother in song, Samuel Rogers, who
d declined the laurels on the plea of age.

In 1852 the Duke of Wellington's death was the theme
the first verses published by the Laureate in discharge
his functions. It is remarkable, and to some it may
a consoling example of the necessary superficiality
day-by-day criticism, that we find Tennyson, in a
ter thanking Henry Taylor for a just and discerning
ogium, writing that he is doubly grateful for it in
all but universal depreciation of his poem by the
ess. Yet it is probably the best poem on a national
nt that has ever been struck off by a Laureate
der the sudden impatient spur of the moment;
nembering that for a poet of established reputation
s kind of improvisation is a serious ordeal. Southey
ld only deplore George the Third's death in hexa-

[1] *Memoir.* [2] *Memoir.*

meters that were incontestably deplorable; and Wo
worth, as Laureate, attempted nothing of the s
From this point of view Tennyson's success in
Wellington Ode, which is well sustained at a h
level of solemn harmony, may be reckoned uniq
though the original version, which must have b
rapidly composed, was amended and strengthened
three subsequent editions. The intermediate chan
were not invariably for the better. Of the two line

> "Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
> He died on Walmer's lonely shore"—

the second line, which is perhaps the weakest t
Tennyson ever published, was inserted in 1853,
most deservedly ejected in the following year.
the couplet—

> "Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
> Remembering all his greatness in the past,"

one misses with regret the original second line—

> "Our sorrow draws but on the golden past,"

which is stronger in sound and feeling, and must h
been changed for the prosaic reason that sorrow
the dead can never draw on the present. The k
note of heroic character is finely given in the lines—

> "Not once or twice in our rough island-story
> The path of duty was the way to glory."

They are repeated as the burden or lofty moral of
poem, and have taken rank among the quotati
from English poetry that are familiar in our mou
as household words.

'he true successors of the earlier bards, who ebrated in *chansons de geste* and in ballads the ds and death of great men or some famous ional exploit, have been, in quite modern times, ts who, like Campbell, Cowper, and the author of e Burial of Sir John Moore, spontaneously and fficially, by some happy stroke of genius, seized n some stirring incident of the time, and struck verfully the right popular note. That this has now ome generally assumed to be the vocation of the al Laureate, rather than the production of courtly se, may be fairly attributed in a large degree to nnyson, who evidently so understood his office, for began thenceforward to write poems upon heroic loits, or the incidents of national war. In this spirit composed The Charge of the Light Brigade, a e rolling war-chant, with a thunderous echo in the ninant rhyme, which gained hearty applause from British soldiers in the Crimea, particularly for well-known line—"Some one had blundered" hat was omitted in the revised version of 1855. the Defence of Lucknow, an incident that is nous in the annals of the Indian Mutiny, there passages full of vigour and animation, but on whole too much vehemence and tumultuous ivity; the poet endeavours to startle and strike imagination by glowing pictures of the realities of iege; he accumulates authentic details, he tries to e us the scenes and events with the roar of battle, terror and the misery, the furious assaults and the sperate defence, as on the stage of a theatre :—

hen on another wild morning another wild earthquake out-
tore

Clean from our lines of defence ten or twelve good pace
or more.
Rifleman, high on the roof, hidden there from the light
the sun—
One has leapt up on the breach, crying out: 'Follow m
follow me!'—
Mark him—he falls! then another, and *him* too, and dow
goes he.
Had they been bold enough then, who can tell but th
traitors had won?
Boardings and rafters and doors—an embrasure! make wa
for the gun!
Now double-charge it with grape! It is charged and w
fire, and they run."

Here is abundance of fiery animation, but also too man
descriptive particulars; and as the whole poem is com
posed in this manner, it resembles a vivid narration
events in pictorial prose. Such work hardly lies withi
the compass of the poetic artist, whose business
is to simplify and concentrate the general impression
and though the Defence of Lucknow is full
energy and ardour, one must pass upon it the criticis
that the canvas is overcrowded and the verse to
hurried and vehement for the ballad, or for the lyr
of heroism, which is best when it gives a single trag
situation in clear outline.

In the poetry of action Tennyson made his highe
score by The Revenge: A Ballad of the Flee
although even this spirited poem, with its note
stately and unconquerable valour, hardly attains th
impressive simplicity of the true ballad; it is still to
circumstantial. We have here a splendidly versifie
narrative of a sea-fight, with all the atmosphere
the winds and the waves; it is a noble *chanson*

, and the poem ends with the closing of the waters
the ship :—

ıen a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke from
sleep,
d the water began to heave and the weather to moan,
d or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
d a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake
grew,
l it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts
and their flags,
d the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shatter'd
navy of Spain,
d the little Revenge herself went down by the island crags
be lost evermore in the main."

distance of time lends its enchantment to this
, and three centuries gave Tennyson the right
pective; he could throw into strong relief the
tion with its central figure, he could omit
iculars because they were unknown; he followed
orce the natural instinct of popular tradition
h preserves the broad lines of heroic character
achievement, leaving the rest to oblivion.
ning is more rare in modern poetry than success
eroic verse—in the art of rendering with strength,
ty, and dignity the acts and emotions of men
noments which string up their energies to the
est pitch, and bring into full play the qualities
nflexible courage and endurance. To write of
es long ago is always hard enough, but in such
romantic colouring is admissible, and the lapse of
y years has luckily rubbed out all but the salient
ures of a great event or a daring exploit. When
subjects belong to contemporary history, to the

modern bard's own lifetime, the task becomes more difficult, and has foiled poets of very hi reputation, as in the case of Walter Scott, who given us a magnificent battle piece of Flodden, two very inferior poems upon Waterloo. You cann be romantic over a contemporary battle or siege th has just been fully described in the newspapers, the public knows exactly what happened; while you attempt to be severely realistic you are l among unmanageable details; and you find yours emphatically versifying what has already been sa with the effective actuality of prose.

CHAPTER IV

MAUD; IDYLLS OF THE KING; ENOCH ARDEN

August 1852 a son (the present Lord Tennyson) d been born in their house at Twickenham; and in e next year they had at last found a permanent iding place. For in 1853 Tennyson, having by this ne an income of £500 a year from his poems, bought rringford in the Isle of Wight, his favourite habita- n ever afterwards, within sight of the sea, and thin sound of its waves in a storm; with the vns, spreading trees, and meadows running up to e skirts of windy downs, that have been frequently etched in his poetry, and will long be identified with presence. There he worked, morning and evening, "Maud," sitting in his high-backed wooden chair in ttle room at the top of the house, and smoking the red pipes during certain half-hours of strict seclusion en his best thoughts came to him.[1]

In 1837 a collection of verses had been published der the title of The Tribute, signifying that they re contributed by various writers of repute at that e, in order that the profits of a subscription list the volume might be offered to a man of letters o had fallen into poverty. Monckton Milnes wrote nd for subscriptions to all his friends, among others Alfred Tennyson, who sent a humorous refusal,

[1] *Memoir.*

averring that he had sworn never to assist in suc enterprises. Monckton Milnes did not appreciate th bantering tone of the letter, was angered by th refusal, and wrote a sour answer, whereupon Tennyso turned away his wrath with good-natured expostula tion, and sent his contribution. It is a short poe of passionate lamentation for a woman who has bee loved and is lost; and it not only contains the them upon which Maud was long afterwards worked ou dramatically, but the stanzas reappear, with sligh changes and considerable omissions, in the twenty fourth section of the later poem; nor did Tennyso ever rise higher in the elegiac strain than in som of the best of them:—

> "O that 'twere possible
> After long grief and pain
> To find the arms of my true love
> Round me once again!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Alas for her that met me,
> That heard me softly call,
> Came glimmering thro' the laurels
> At the quiet evenfall,
> In the garden by the turrets
> Of the old manorial hall."[1]

The fifth edition of In Memoriam had been publishe in 1852. It was followed in 1855 by the first appea ance of Maud, which Lowell rather affectedly calls th antiphonal voice of the earlier poem. The change subject, tone, and manner was certainly striking; an

[1] As The Tribute is now a very rare book, it is worth mentio ing that this poem, in its original form, may be found at th end of vol. lxxix. of the Annual Register (1837). The sub-edit of the time was rebuked by his chief for having inserted amo his selections from the year's poetry a bit of trivial verse.

e public seem to have been taken by surprise. The ansition was from irremediable sorrow to irresistible ssion; from philosophic meditation to a romantic ve story with a tragic ending; from stanzas swaying owly like a dirge within their uniform compass, to abundant variety of metrical movement, according ith the changes of scene and attuned to the develop-ent of the plot through ardent courtship to the lover's iumph, to detection, a duel, the frenzy of remorse, d the final chant of liberation from all these iserable memories, when "the old hysterical mock isease" is forgotten and overpowered in the tumul-ous agitation of a great national war. The general ader was unfavourably prepossessed by the tone of stless despondency that runs through the opening anzas, and by the intimations of a morbid temperament, a sickly cast of thought, which are given as the pre-onitory symptoms of a mind unfitted to withstand e shock of a sudden catastrophe. The light literary viewer was disposed to be satirical upon a hero hose attitude was not heroical; the higher criti-sm was divided. The poet was, in fact, contending ainst a difficulty that is inseparable from the form a metrical romance in which a single personage lls his own story; for while a skilful novelist ould easily have sketched such a character, or a aywright might have brought it out by action d dialogue, yet when a man is set up to confess s own intense sensibility, to describe his own misery d madness, the part becomes much harder to manage, d the audience is apt to become impatient with him. evertheless Henry Taylor, Ruskin, Jowett, and the rownings spoke without hesitation of the poem's

great merits. Tyndall bought the volume on his way to a theatre one evening; he read it between the acts of the performance, continued it outside in the street and had reached the end before he got home. He admired it extremely, and Lord Houghton, who agreed with him, exclaimed that the reviewers were blundering.[1] Jowett wrote:—

"No poem since Shakespeare seems to show equal power of the same kind, or equal knowledge of human nature. No modern poem contains more lines that ring in the ears of men. I do not know any verse out of Shakespeare in which the ecstasy of love soars to such a height."

This is certainly no faint praise; and although the general verdict would be that it is excessive, we have at any rate the first impression made by the poem's emotional force upon a very critical intellect.

"The peculiarity of Maud," Tennyson said, "is that different phases of passion in one person take the place of different characters"; and the effect of his own recitation was to set this conception in clear relief, by showing the connection and significance of the linked monodies, combined with the vivid musical rendering of a pathetic love-story. The first spark of love kindles rapidly into heat, and the emotion rises by degrees of intensity to the rapture of meeting Maud in the garden, falling again suddenly to the depths of bitter despair; until the luckless youth again recovers heart and strength in the stir and rumour of national war, and determines, as many have done before him, to stiffen his nerves by a course of energetic activity and to try the bracing tonic of real danger.

The poem in its development strikes all the lyrical

[1] *Memoir.*

ıords, although it cannot be said that all of them are uched with equal skill. Probably the sustained and erfect execution of such a varied composition would e too arduous a task for any artist, since it is no easy atter to substitute, dramatically, different phases of ssion in one person for different characters. Some nsiderable mental agility is needed to fall in with e rapid changes of mood and motive which succeed ch other within the compass of a piece that is too ort for the delineation of character: ranging from elodramatic horror in the opening stanzas to passion-e and joyous melodies in the middle part, sinking to a dolorous wail, rising into frenzy, and closing th the trumpet note of war.

The Monodrama has in fact its peculiar difficulties of ecution: the speaker has to introduce himself, and explain the situation in a kind of indirect narrative at must be kept up to the lyrical pitch by effort and ıphasis. The strain of this necessity is especially sible at the beginning of Maud, because the story ens with the familiar incident of financial disaster, d ordinary matters of fact have to be draped in the rb of poetry. The father of the soliloquist has been ined by the failure of a great speculation, which is derstood to have enriched Maud's father; and the n naturally denounces lying financiers and mercantile eed in general, contrasting the ill-gotten luxury of society which must cheat or be cheated with the deous misery and crime of the poor. If these be the nkers of a calm world, the blessings of Peace; if ckpockets, burglars, and swindlers are to flourish, he finitely prefers "the heart of the citizen hissing in ır on his own hearthstone," the ardour of battle, the

supreme struggle that turns every man into a patri
and a soldier. Clearly the poet is here compelled
the story's need of elevation, at this part of it,
paint in sombre or startling colours, to rhapsodi
somewhat beyond reason, to overflow with scornf
invective, and to allow a solitary youth to justi
his disgust of life by railing at the degradation a
rottenness of the world around him. It is Locksl
Hall with the cry of revolt against modern socie
pitched an octave higher; and in the first and four
sections there is so much in this vein that the me
dramatic impression is not easily shaken off. Englis
men at large hesitate over thunderous denunciatio
in verse, of social wrongs; and the sorrows or d
appointments of the money market are good matt
for the prose writer, but hardly for the poet, w
cannot be expected to give the economist or t
politician fairplay. Questions of this kind belong
the frigid utilitarian order, and it is dangerous
handle them enthusiastically.

But the vision of Maud, his playmate in childhoo
scatters all these distempered complainings; and t
young man becomes absorbed in the love of a beauti
girl. The wooing and the winning of her, the rap
growth of a mutual passion, the stolen meetings, t
plighting of troth, the ecstasy of his adoration, t
waiting for her in the garden after a ball, are told
a series of exquisite lyrics, of which it may be sa
that the English language contains none better th
the very best of them. The subtle influences of sig
and sound, of dawn and twilight,

> "the voice of the long sea wave as it swelled
> Now and then in the dim grey dawn,"

e call of the birds in the high Hall garden, the reading cedar, the glance of an evening sun over e dark moorland, the chilly white mist falling like shroud, mingle with and heighten the romance of eir secret love passages, and bring shadowy pre-ntiments of danger. The stars shine brighter as he oks at them and thinks of his sleeping lady :—

"But now by this my love has closed her sight
And given false death her hand, and stol'n away
To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell
Among the fragments of the golden day.

. . . . . .

And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow
Of your soft splendours that you look so bright?
Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,
Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,
Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe."

Yet the poet is still hampered by the necessity of plaining his plot, and of describing the *dramatis rsonæ* through the mouth of a single actor; and so e sensitive lover has to tell of his meeting with the ung lord, his rival, who,

"Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,
And curving a contumelious lip,
Gorgonised me from head to foot
With a stony British stare."

his sharp figure-drawing, almost caricature, would be cellent in a novel or upon the stage; but when it is erposed among tender idyllic melodies there is a jar on the delicate ear; there is a lapse into undignified pression which is incompatible with the refined altation of tone that is essential to a romantic

passion-play. In his beautiful song of rapturo expectation, "Come into the garden, Maud," the po rises to the highest point of his verse just when t drama reaches its climax; for the end of the roman has come, and the whole pageantry of lovemaki vanishes like a dream. The lovers are detected, the is a furious quarrel, a fatal duel; and the unfortuna hero is next found, mad with despair and remorse, the coast of Brittany.

The first title proposed for the poem was "Ma and the Madness"; and a leading specialist for i sanity wrote that it was the most faithful represen tion of madness since Shakespeare.[1] Such a certifica is but of moderate value in poetry, where succe depends on artistic treatment of the subject; and Shakespeare the disease is never more than an acce sory to the delineation of his principal characte Hamlet was mad only when he chose to be so; nor it possible to agree with Tennyson when he said, alluding to some captious reviews, that "without t prestige of Shakespeare Hamlet (if it came out no would be treated in just the same way" by inco petent critics. The two characters, Hamlet and Mau lover, will not bear a moment's comparison from a point of view. But delirium is far less manageable a poem than in a play, where violent scenes a speeches are admissible; and if we allow for this inev able difficulty of execution, it may be agreed that t wandering incoherent mind of Maud's lover in madness is effectively rendered. The final stroph of the poem have some strenuous and animated lin representing a puissant nation rising boldly to t alarm of war, which is to purge the people of slo

[1] *Memoir.*

mean cupidity, and to unite them in one patriotic ulse. Some such notions of fighting as a whole-e restorative had been engendered, in 1855, among e-keeping Englishmen by forty years of peace; since that time they have learnt by experience t war really signifies; and the belief that it is od medicine for the cankers of plethoric prosperity t now have fallen considerably out of fashion. Mr. lstone, in the *Quarterly Review* of 1855, protested nst the doctrine that war is a cure for moral evil, hat it is a specific for the particular evil of mon worship. He maintained, on the contrary, modern war is a remarkable incentive to that ship; though Tennyson might have replied that in on's great council of war Mammon's speech is bly pacific. There is at any rate a curious adum-ion of recent incidents in one sentence of this le, where it is said that "war in its moral opera-resembles, perhaps, more than anything else the ng of a gold-field." Mr. Gladstone, however, con-rably qualified his first adverse judgment in a note ed 1878) that he appended to this article when it republished in his *Gleanings of Past Years*—

Whether it is to be desired that a poem should require common men a good deal of effort in order to compre-it; whether all that is put into the mouth of the oquist in 'Maud' is within the lines of poetical verisimili-; whether this poem has the full moral equilibrium which marked a characteristic of the sister-works; are questions perhaps, to discussion. But I have neither done justice e text to its rich and copious beauties of detail, nor to its lyrical and metrical power. And what is worse, I have to comprehend rightly the relation between particular ges in the poem and its general scope. This is, I con-not to set forth any coherent strain, but to use for

poetical ends all the moods and phases allowable under t laws of the art, in a special form of character, which is passioned, fluctuating, and ill-grounded. The design, wh seems to resemble that of the Ecclesiastes in another sphe is arduous; but Mr. Tennyson's power of execution is probab nowhere greater."

The allusion to Ecclesiastes is enigmatic, for t Preacher deals with neither love nor war, and theme is that all luxury, pleasure, and the delight the senses, are but vexation and vanity. If any semblance with Tennyson's poetry is to be found Ecclesiastes, it should be with the Palace of Art.[1]

In the same article it is observed, truly, that Tenn son's war poetry is not equal to his poetry of pea One may add that neither irony, nor fierce invecti suits Tennyson's genius very well; they carry hi too near to the perilous domain of rhetoric. It is the lays of love and heartrending lamentation Maud, with their combined intensity and refineme that unqualified praise may be accorded, to th romantic grace and their soft cadences, in which t melody seems inseparable from the meaning.

For Onomatopœia, which began by direct imitati

[1] Ecclesiastes ii. 4, 5, 6, 8, 11—

"I made me great works; I builded me houses; I plant me vineyards:

. . . . . .

"I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasu of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and wom singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical inst ments, and that of all sorts.

. . . . . .

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrough and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no pro under the sun."

atural sounds, has been developed by the highest
f poetry into prolonged associations of sound and
e. A single line may set the ear listening; it
the memory by recalling what has been once
d, or by making the words echo their significance,
r example in

"By the long wash of Australasian seas."

the subtle sensibility that adapts the word to the
g adapts the sentence or cadence to the general
ning or spirit of a whole passage,[1] reviving the
ession of a summer dawn in a garden, the scent
owers, "the voice of the long sea wave." Recita-
is a better test of these qualities than reading, for
oetry may be said to make its primary appeal to
ear; and even the length of the lines must have
ed itself to a great degree on the natural con-
ns of respiration and oral delivery. It is versifica-
regularly accentuated, with the terminal rhyme
ing each line's end harmoniously, that now chiefly
hts the English ear, fixing the measure by a recur-
chime, a beautiful invention that is nevertheless a
paratively recent importation into European verse.
our earliest poetry the place of the accents was
ated by alliteration; while since there was no
inal bar, the line's length might be varied at the
oser's discretion. Some of the cantos in Maud
to have been so far constructed on a similar
iple, that the lines vary considerably in length,
the rhyme is sounded with remarkable skill
regular intervals, marking fluctuations of emo-
We have here, in fact, something resembling

e a dissertation on Onomatopœia in Jowett's *Plato*, vol. i.
).

what is called in France the *Vers Libre*, mani
lated by a master of harmonies—a metrical arran
ment of which, though it is no innovation
our poetry, Tennyson has made superior use. I
although Southey discarded regularity of length
the verse of Thalaba and Kehama, the prevailing fo
in those poems is the ten-syllable blank verse met
varied by shorter iambic lines, with a correctness
scansion that becomes monotonous. In Maud t
poet by no means despises alliteration; he is rath
apt to overstrain it occasionally as a method of
forcing the sense of a line by its sound, and
weighting its accentuation.

"The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divides the shudder
night."

. . . . . .

"And out he walked when the wind like a broken worldl
wailed."

. . . . . .

But the value of his experiment comes from
dexterity in expanding the undulating flexibility
the old English free verse, with the rhymes interpos
as an accompaniment to the metre, and falling on t
expectant ear like the chime of bells. Nor do we ev
detect in Tennyson, as we do too often in Brownin
the insincere or superfluous phrase that is broug
in for the rhyme's sake, and is accommodated wi
more or less dexterity to the poet's real intentio
Throughout his poetry we have constantly reason
admire his resource and capacity for shaping metri
forms to suit the impression that he desires to conve
while in such pieces as The Talking Oak we m
appreciate the light and delicate touch of his ha
upon the standard customary metres of our languag

Having by this time taken up his settled quarters Farringford, Tennyson was now seriously occupied th his work upon the Arthurian legends, which d already furnished him with material for some of e best among his minor poems. Two Idylls were print by 1857, and in 1859 the first four were blished. The poet then took ship for Lisbon, whence contemplated a journey into southern Spain; but was an impatient traveller, who loved above things his own land, not largely endued with much-enduring temper of his Ulysses; so the tumnal heat and the mosquitoes drove him back to gland within a month. Meanwhile, the Idylls were pidly and widely taken up by the English public, th many congratulations from personal friends. ackeray sends, after reading them, a letter full of characteristic humour and good-fellowship—

'The landlord—at Folkestone—gave two bottles of his ret, and I think I drank the most; and here I have been ng back in the chair and thinking of those delightful Idylls, thoughts being turned to you; and what could I do but grateful to that surprising genius which has made me so py."

Jowett wrote enthusiastically of the "Maid of tolat"—

'There are hundreds and hundreds of all ages, men as well women, who, although they have not died for love (have no ention of doing so), will find there a sort of ideal consolation heir own troubles and remembrances."

The Duke of Argyll's praise is slightly, though intentionally, ambiguous. "Your Idylls of the ng," he tells the author, "will be understood and nired by many who are incapable of understanding

and appreciating many others of your works." I goes on—

"Macaulay is certainly not a man incapable of *understandi* anything, but I knew that his tastes in poetry were so form in another line that I considered him a good test, and th days ago I gave him 'Guinevere'——"

with the result that Macaulay was "delighted with it Upon this Tennyson responds to His Grace somewh caustically—

"My dear Duke,—Doubtless Macaulay's good opinion worth having, and I am grateful to you for letting me kn it, but this time I intend to be thick-skinned; nay, I scarc believe that I should ever feel very deeply the pen-punctu of those parasitic animalcules of the press, if they kept the selves to what I write, and did not glance spitefully a personally at myself. I hate spite."[1]

Folklore has rarely undergone such changes style and transformations of environment in i passage through different countries and successi generations, as the Arthurian legend has exhibit from its origin among the Celts of insular Brita to its latest revival in modern English poetry. T lays and tales of Arthur and his knights, the reli of a large number that have been lost, were sav from oblivion in England by the Anglo-Norma whose poetic instinct led them to enjoy in th courts and castles the songs of wandering minstr and popular stories of marvellous adventure. Th the primitive element took a Romanesque fashio and was expanded in the spirit of mediæval chivalr the legends were translated into French and Englis

[1] All these quotations are taken from the *Memoir*.

til at last they were gathered together and fixed manently in an English form when Caxton printed Thomas Malory's collection. A whole cycle surnds the central figure of King Arthur, whom one y conjecture to have embodied the true tradition of ne valiant chief who fought hard for his lands and people against the Saxon invaders; for in a pretoric age it is the real hero, famous when he lived, o becomes fabulous after his death. And so Arthur erged out of a period of darkest confusion, trail- after him Christian myths and heroic legends; passed through wandering minstrelsy to prose hance, and then again into poetry when he became portrait, in Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, of a brave ght perfected in the twelve moral virtues, the ling actor in an allegory that is supposed to teach rals and politics under a transparent masque of enturous knight-errantry.

The generall end, therefore, of all the book is to fashion a bleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline, ch for that I conceived shoulde be more plausible and sing, being coloured into an historical fiction, the which most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of ter than for profite of the ensample, I chose the historye of g Arthur, as most fit for the excellency of his person, being e famous by many men's former works, and also furthest the daunger of envy and suspicion of the present time."[1]

During the classical and rationalistic period of nteenth-century poetry King Arthur's romantic re suffered eclipse, until in the early nineteenth tury Malory's book was republished. And lastly shone out again fifty years later in the Idylls,

[1] Spenser's "Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh" (1589).

modelled by Tennyson after the type used by Spense as the image of lofty morality, the modern gentlema the magnanimous husband of an unworthy queen. A Spenser dedicated his poem to "Elizabeth, by th Grace of God, Queen of England, France, and Irelan and Virginia," so Tennyson offered the Idylls as h tribute to the Sovereign of far wider dominions:—

"But thou, my Queen,
Not for itself, but thro' thy living love
For one to whom I made it o'er his grave
Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul,
Ideal manhood closed in real man,
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one
Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
That hover'd between war and wantonness."

Thus Arthur is still a poet's ideal and illustration unstained virtue and manliness, with the differen that his environment of fairyland, enchantmen and adventurous gallantry, has become much mo strange to modern readers than it was in the sixteen century, when Spenser used the conventional roman style and apparatus that were current in his da Arthur does not even represent, in dim outline, t lineaments of some famous historical personage, li Charlemagne or even Roland; he is an unsubstant and almost wholly fabulous model of chivalric perfe tion; the Round Table, the Knights errant, Merli the Holy Grail, are employed as the framework of picture restored and repainted; the costumes a scenery of the drama are antique, with a revis

vision of the characters. A modern romance of chivalry is necessarily a restoration, with the details of character, circumstance, and manners reproduced, as in Scott's romances, more or less accurately from the surviving records of the time. In the case of the Arthurian idylls this accessory work could not be done, because authentic materials are entirely wanting; the names, personages, and situations are either mythical, or at most reflect later mediæval ideas and types. To a certain extent this has been a drawback upon the popularity of a brilliant poetic enterprise; for it was inevitable that upon the critical, naturalistic, exacting temper of the nineteenth century in its third quarter the Idylls should have produced some feeling of incongruousness, of perfection in art with a lack of actuality—an impression of the kind that is delicately conveyed in a letter from Ruskin to Tennyson soon after the publication of the new poems. The four Kings seemed to him the jewels of the crown, and certain passages he reckoned to be "finer than almost all you have done yet. Nevertheless" (he went on), "I am not sure but I feel the art and finish in these poems a little more than I like to feel it. Yet I am not a fair judge quite, for I am so much of a realist as not by any possibility to interest myself much in an unreal subject, to feel it as I should, and the very sweetness and stateliness of the words strike me all the more as *pure* workmanship. . . . Treasures of wisdom there are in it, and word-painting such as never was yet for concentration, nevertheless it seems to me that so great power ought not to be spent on visions of things past, but on the living present. For one hearer capable of feeling the depth of this poem, I believe ten would feel a depth quite as great if the stream flowed through things nearer the hearer. . . I cannot but think that the intense, masterful, and unerring transcript of an actuality, and the relation of a story of

any real human life as a poet would watch and analyse i would make all men feel more or less what poetry was, as the felt what Life and Fate were in their instant workings."[1]

Ruskin here touches and indicates a line of criticisn upon the general conception of the Idylls, as shown b their treatment of the Arthurian legends, with which although some may pronounce it inadequate, man may be disposed to agree. Romance-writing has bee defined, half seriously, as the art of producing th literary work that can give the greatest imaginativ pleasure to a people in the actual state of their habit and beliefs. The Idylls adapted the mythical tale of the Round Table to the very highest standard c æsthetic taste, intellectual refinement, and moral del cacy then prevailing in cultivated English society; an by that society they were very cordially appreciated Undoubtedly the figure of Arthur—representing warrior-king endowed with the qualities of unselfis ness, clemency, generosity, and noble trustfulness, ye betrayed by his wife and his familiar friend, forgivin her, and going forth to die in a lost fight agains treacherous rebels—has a grandeur and a pathos tha might well affect a gravely emotional people. Mor over, the poem is a splendidly illuminated Moralit unfolding scenes and incidents that illustrate hero virtues and human frailties, gallantry, sore tempt tions, domestic perfidy, chaste virginal love, and subt amorous enchantments. It abounds also in descriptiv passages which attest the close attention of the poet ear and eye to natural sights and sounds, and his ra faculty of fashioning his verse to their colours an echoes. In short, to quote from the *Memoir*:—

[1] *Memoir.*

"He has made these old legends his own, restored the idealism, infused into them a spirit of modern thought and of ethical significance; setting his characters in a rich and varied landscape."

This indeed he has done well. And yet these archaic stories, as they are told in Malory's fifteenth-century English, which preserves the romantic flavour, have never lost their hold on the English world at large. In their latest form they have to contend with the modern prejudice against unreality, against the sense that we have here a vision not merely of things that are past, but of things that could never have been, of a world that is neither ancient nor modern, but a fairyland peopled with knights and dames whose habits and conversation are adjusted to the decorous manners of our nineteenth century. In Malory's time the legends were apparently regarded by the ordinary reader as belonging to what we should call the Romance of History, for Caxton relates that he was much pressed "to emprynte the noble history of the Saynt Graal and that most renowned crysten king, Arthur," but that he long hesitated because of the opinion that all such books as had been made of Arthur had been "but feyned and fabled." Yet when Malory's book was reprinted in 1634, the editor indignantly reproved, in his preface, the incredulity and stupidity of those who deny or make doubt of Arthur's immortal name and fame; and as to the manner of writing, he affirmed that he has only corrected it where "King Arthur and some of his knights were declared to swear profane and use superstitious speeches." The tradition was still regarded as not wholly fictitious, with the charm of antique diction hanging about it to

encourage the illusion; and marvels and miracles, gods and giants, were commonly accepted with a kind of half belief by readers who took little account of the Improbable or the Unnatural. But this conventional understanding has long disappeared; the conceptions are now universally admitted to be "fayned and fabled"; and it has become much more difficult to use the old legends as mere vehicles for new manners and ideas than it was to translate the Celtic folklore into the language of mediæval romance. Spenser's *Fairy Queen* was frankly allegorical; and if we regard the Idylls also as beautiful allegories, we may be content, as their author was, with his suggestion that King Arthur represents conscience, and that the poem is a picture of the different ways in which men looked on conscience, some reverencing it as a heaven-born king, others ascribing to it an earthly origin—a philosophical argument set forth in a parable. We may then be satisfied with learning from the poet himself, that "Camelot, for instance, a city of shadowy palaces, is everywhere symbolical of the gradual growth of human beliefs and institutions, and of the spiritual development of man." Symbolism is an instrument by which the severe and peremptory dictates of formal philosophy or religion are softened down and shaped for poetic expression; and in the light of this interpretation the Idylls are seen to be a finely woven tissue of figurative mysticism, clothing the antique forms with fresh esoteric meaning.

"The Holy Grail," said Tennyson, "is one of the most imaginative of my poems. I have expressed there my strong feeling as to the reality of the Unseen"; and truly in no other Idyll does the spiritual signi

ance stand out so clearly: it is the most successful his excursions into this field of allegorical romance. om the same point of view we may admire and erpret, to a certain extent, the whole collection, ough it must be remarked that stories with a moral son, however beautifully told, are not precisely egories. Moreover, Tennyson has also said that here is no single fact or incident in the Idylls, wever seemingly mystical, which cannot be exained without any mystery or allegory whatever," d he constantly protested against pressing too far e search for an inner meaning; he would not admit obligation to find it everywhere. He would have obably accepted the theory that his poem should treated as a renewed presentation of the tragic perience of life, where men and women pay the evitable penalty of sin and vice; and where neverleless the highest nobility of character will not ways ward off unmerited disaster and final catarophe. The legend of a king's ruin through his ife's infidelity is an ancient tale of wrong, that has amped itself on the popular imagination by its amatic force and the contrast of characters. Arthur e King, Lancelot the chief warrior of his host, uinevere the peerless beauty who brings discord tween them, Modred the traitor knight, represent rsonages that belong to epic and romance in various stant ages and countries; the traitor meets his unishment, but the hero perishes unhappily. Such as the lesson of the primitive story-teller, from omer downward, who drew life from natural experiice, not as it is seen through the romantic colouring a softer moralising age. And the same lesson is to

be read in the Idylls, although the action of the dram the conduct and character of the leading personage are applied and brought home to the modern read by so far readjusting them as to bring them near to the feelings and proprieties of the present da They are made more probable in order that the may be more impressive ; the poet has preserved th ideals, clothing them in new conventional garments.

That Tennyson could excel in the art of veilin an experience of all ages under an allegory we kno from his short poem the Lady of Shalott, whe the mirror of the shadows of the passing world, an the magic web that the lady weaves wearily, a brought in to give an atmosphere of mystery to th story of the Maid of Astolat's hopeless passion f Lancelot. But in the Idyll of Lancelot and Elaine th treatment is no longer mysterious but naturalisti we have the maiden's timid adoration of the magn ficent knight, the grief and trouble of her father an brothers, and the Queen's angry jealousy at hearin that Lancelot is wearing the maiden's token. Th shy sweetness of Elaine, who is dying of unrequite love, is contrasted with the figure of the supe imperious Guinevere, who scorns her husband, ' moral child without the craft to rule," and sharp suspects her paramour. Lancelot offers her th diamonds which he has won with a sore wound at tournament, and she flings them out of her windo into the river, just as the barge with the dead Maid Astolat comes floating down before the palace. Th incident has a distant resemblance to some dram of modern society, and, indeed, the moral of this Idy is so plain as to need no allegorical interpretation ;

a true parable and warning for men and women ways and everywhere. The Idyll interweaves some agnificent embroidery upon the unvarnished canvas the old romance; it contains the plaintive song—

"Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain"—

e sighing of innocent love sinking to quiet despair—th many passages of tender grace and animating agery—

They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger."

At the central situation and catastrophe of the thurian epic we have a still more remarkable onstruction of plot and character. In the old ronicle, when Lancelot and Guinevere are at last trapped and beset, the knight fights his way out, d the Queen is condemned by her husband to be rnt alive, but is rescued by Lancelot after much odshed; and the great war begins in which the ole Table Round is dissolved. Lancelot surrenders e Queen to King Arthur, who takes her back as nelaus took Helen back to Lacedæmon; there is the me sentiment of a woman's comparative irresponsiity when fierce warriors are contending for her; and inevere does not become a nun until Arthur has

been slain in the last battle. The sympathy of t chronicle is entirely with Guinevere—

"Therefore, all ye that be lovers, call into your reme brance the moneth of May, as did Queen Guinevere, for wh I make here a little mention, that while she loved she wa true lover, and therefore she had a good end."

She is here the persistent type of the fatal wom who brings about a hero's death, the legendary cause wars, assassinations, and the loss of kingdoms, as s is still the cause of bloodsheds and revengeful murd among warlike tribes; her misconduct is now in civilis society no more than a private misfortune, it was f merly a public calamity. And yet the old Cel romance treats Guinevere with indulgence and pi for it is a tale of unhappy love. In Tennyson's Id the tone and management of the situation have be carefully adjusted to the ethical sentiment of the p sent time. The King, when he visits the Queen the nunnery to which she has fled, promises that s shall be protected; he leaves men

"To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd."

But he will never see her again—

"I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house.
. . . . . .
Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their bane."

The unfortunate Queen, left alone, pours out

orse at having preferred an ardent lover, the flower hivalry, to her blameless King, whom she had once ıd too immaculate—

> "A moral child without the craft to rule,
> Else had he not lost me.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,
> That pure severity of perfect light.
> I yearned for warmth and colour, which I found
> In Lancelot."

hus in Tennyson's poem we have the faithless wife injured husband of our own society; a woman's nized repentance and a man's stern justice that is her hard nor unforgiving; we have the costumes, scenery, and the *dramatis personæ* of the old romance h a change of feeling and manners. The result is, he first place, that the excellent Arthur lacks tragic lity; he does not interest us sufficiently; while there ven something tame, from the dramatic point of w, in his high-minded generosity toward Guinevere. ondly, to a mind prepossessed with the exactitude of lern taste, the scene between the King and Queen Amesbury, notwithstanding its elevation of tone austere purity of feeling, suggests something like plendid anachronism, though as a moral lesson, ly delivered, it has indisputable power and beauty. poet is undoubtedly entitled to illustrate universal chs by striking off a new and powerful impression n the unchanging types of human character; yet se who have no great skill at deciphering the ponoia, the underlying significance of the Idylls, be pardoned for confessing to a feeling of some- g remote, shadowy, and spectacular in the company

of these mediæval knights and dames, wizards
wantons, who pass over the stage and perform t
parts before an audience whose deeper thoughts l
long ceased to run in the vein of fantastic alleg
The unreality of the whole environment inevit
diminishes the dramatic effect.

The story of Tristram and La Belle Iseult,[1] whic
perhaps the most beautifully pathetic in the w
cycle of Romance, stirring all hearts with symp
for irresistible ill-fated passion, is left half tol
Malory's Morte d'Arthur, though Lancelot allude
Tristram's treacherous murder by King Mark.
has Tennyson, in his Idyll of the Last Tournam
availed himself of the supremely poetical endin
the old legend, when Tristram, mortally woun
sends a messenger across the sea to bring Is
of Cornwall, his first love, to Brittany. The
turning vessel, when it comes within sight from
Breton shore, is to hoist a white sail if it is brin
Iseult, a black sail if she has refused to come.
Iseult of Brittany, his wife, tells him falsely that
vessel has been sighted with a black sail, where
Tristram, who had kept himself alive ["retenait sa v
until then, lets himself expire; and Iseult of Corn
lands only to die of grief over his body. Here the do
ant feeling is of pity and pardon for broken-hea
lovers, but in the Idyll of the Last Tournament T
ram's story has the conclusion of another and prob
a later version, which is sudden and violent.
Mark, Arthur's anti-type, is the suspicious and
dictive husband, who surprises Tristram with his
and kills him in the arms of Iseult; there is her

[1] Or "Isoude."

gory or romantic circumstance, but the sombre rality of a doom like that of Francesca da Rimini, lovers whose fate melted even the austerity of nte. One might wish that Tennyson had preferred softer and more compassionate ending; the more because the story of Tristram, lying with failing ath in his castle that overlooked the sea, and eiving his death stroke from the word brought him the black sail, would have given ample scope for ly wrought descriptive poetry, and for touching the hest chords of emotion. Yet the Idyll tells its n story forcibly, without effort or exaggeration language; the shadow of danger grows darker over amorous discourse of Tristram and Iseult in her er, where the reckless passion of the woman and kindling desire of the man blind them to the ending calamity, until their lips meet—

ut, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd throat,
ut of the dark, just as the lips had touch'd,
ehind him rose a shadow and a shriek—
Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him through the brain."

e poem has several examples of Tennyson's singular l in briefly sketching broad landscapes—

"But Arthur with a hundred spears
Rode far, till o'er the illimitable reed,
And many a glancing plash and sallowy isle,
The wide-wing'd sunset of the misty marsh
Glared on a huge machicolated tower."

ain—

"As the crest of some slow-arching wave,
Heard in dead night along that table-shore,
Drops flat, and after the great waters break
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud."

Or a single line may be the setting of a picture, as

> "The long low dune and lazy plunging sea."

And in the Passing of Arthur, when the King following Modred to the down by the seaside, wh he is to fight the last "dim weird battle of the we the poet again shows his power of fixing by a strokes the impression of a desolate wilderness boun by the sky-lines of mountain and sea.

> "Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
> And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league,
> Back to the sunset bound of Lyonnesse—
> A land of old upheaven from the abyss
> By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
> Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
> And the long mountains ended in a coast
> Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
> The phantom circle of a moaning sea."

In this Idyll, the last of the series, we have Tennys Morte d'Arthur fragment of 1842, reproduced w additions at the beginning and the end to carry on wind up the epical narrative, and to point the m intention. The fantastic folklore no longer disconc us, the final Act of the drama is purely heroic. have a clear view of a noble ruler of his people, b out of his due time, who after striving to realise a lo ideal of justice and humanity in a wild age, finds whole fabric of his State ruined by domestic per and armed rebellion, and marches full of doubt despondency to the battle in which he is to fall and disappear mysteriously.

> "For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
> And have but stricken with the sword in vain;

And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, Thou hast forgotten me in my death :
Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die."

e two armies meet, shrouded in a white mist by the shore, in a stubborn fight, until

"When the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle : but no man was moving there."

sees Modred, kills him with one last stroke, and ls all but slain. Then follows the well-known sode of the casting of his sword Excalibur into mere, and the appearance of the dusky barge with black-hooded Queens.

In no other part of the entire poem is the magic of old romance so finely interfused with allegory as the close of this Idyll, where patriotic courage and tue are seen contending vainly against the powers evil, against that adverse Fate, otherwise inexor-e Circumstance, which is too strong for human deavour, and shapes man's visible destiny. Just as ther valour, nor unflinching devotion to his city, nobility of character, could save Hector from ath, or Andromache from bitter servitude, so inst Arthur the hard facts of life must prevail, l he perishes with all his knights save one. His hanted sword, the emblem of personal prowess, hrown back to the water fairy as a sign that his rfare is ended ; and the three Queens with whom

he sails away to the island-valley of Avilion may
to those who seek for an inner meaning, symboli
of the angels who bear away to heaven the s
of a brave warrior. One may well believe t
the Morte d'Arthur legend is, like the Chanson
Roland, the far-descended survival of a genu
tradition of some ancient battle, in which a renow
chief was defeated and slain with the flower of
fighting men. Roland, like Arthur, survives to
last; his dying effort is to break his sword Durand
as Arthur's is to have Excalibur flung into
lake. But Durandal will not break, for there
holy relics in the hollow of the hilt; Roland c
fesses his sins, commends himself to God, and
Michael and St. Gabriel take charge of his soul.
are here in the full atmosphere of Christian pi
and the mediæval Church, uncoloured by that f
myth-making imagination, the primitive semi-pag
element, which Tennyson has retained to give
charm and glamour to his verse. His poem clos
epically, with the vanishing of Arthur; though
prose chronicle goes on to relate how Lancelot b
farewell to Guinevere in her cloister, followed
funeral to Glastonbury, died there of grief at
tomb, and was buried in his castle of Joyous Gar
where Sir Ector finds men singing the dirge over
"full lamentably." There was good matter here
another Idyll, but the sequel might have disturb
the unity of Tennyson's plan; and moreover
doleful complaint of Sir Ector over Lancelot's bo
with its piercing simplicity of words and feeli
rises so nearly to the highest level of heroic poe
— of such passages as Helen's lament over Hect

rpse in the Iliad—that even Tennyson's art could ardly have paraphrased it successfully.

If, after reading through the Idylls, we take up noch Arden, which followed them in 1864, the con-ast of style and subject is again remarkable. This oem begins by the sketch of a little seaport on the ast Anglian coast, with the nets, old boats, and ship mber strewed about the shore, and it winds on rough the tale of a fisherman's homely joys and iefs, reminding us of Crabbe, without the quality hard pathos which Tennyson found in him; for the ne is softer and there are more gleams of colour. oreover, although the poet has done his best to wer the pitch of his instrument into harmony with quiet unadorned narrative, yet he cannot refrain re and there from some effort in describing common ings poetically. With Crabbe, a full fish-basket ould not have been "ocean spoil in ocean-smelling ier"; nor would Enoch's face have been "rough-ddened with a thousand winter gales," when a ndred might have been overmuch for a sailor not irty years old by the story. Nevertheless the ening lines have the concise plain-speaking of the ffolk poet, with the same method of grouping details the foreground of a picture; and with the difference at Tennyson widens his prospect, giving it distance d air by a sky-line—

"Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
In cluster; then a moulder'd church; and higher
A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd mill;

And high in heaven behind it a gray down
With Danish barrows. . . .

. . . . . .

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,
The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, play'd
Among the waste and lumber of the shore,
Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-nets,
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats updrawn."

Enoch Arden marries, but is forced by stress o poverty to leave his wife and home on a distan voyage. It is when the sailor, escaping from ship wreck, lands alone on a tropical island, that the scen begins to glow, and the verses to fill with sound—

"He could not see the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
The moving whisper of huge trees that branch'd
And blossom'd in the zenith."

And while he wanders under the glare of uncloude noonday amid palms and ferns, in the glittering hea of land and water, his mind's eye sees his Englis home far away—

"The chill
November dawns and dewy-glooming downs,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying leaves,
And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas."

The tale is founded on an incident that must hav been common enough in the foretime, particularl among seafaring people, when men wandered abroa and were lost, or found their way home after man

s, to be welcomed or disowned by their families he case might be. It is the Odyssey of humble iners, and many traces of it may be found in folklore and in the superstitions of Asia as well f Europe, where the forgotten husband is liable e treated on his reappearance as a ghostly *revenant*, ven as a demon who has assumed a dead man's y in order to gain entrance into the house. In t of these stories, as in a rude English sea ballad used to be well known, and in an old French of the Breton coast, the Penelope of a small house- has yielded to her suitors and married again as noch Arden, and as in Crabbe's Tale of the Parting r, where the castaway mariner comes back to find sweetheart an elderly widow. But in the ancient and also in these folk tales the next step is for husband to declare his identity and to demand his ts most vigorously, as Ulysses did, but as Enoch en does not. The popular ending, founded pro- y on real life, is that the man who has been lanted in his absence finally accepts the situation retires disconsolately, or, as in the novel of *Gil* , philosophically. Tennyson has preferred, rightly the purpose of his art, a conclusion of pathetic sacrifice; and Enoch, after one sight of his wife children in a cheerful home, which is tenderly ribed, accepts oblivion, and resolves that they never discover him alive—

> "But if my children care to see me dead,
> Who hardly knew me living, let them come,
> I am their father; but she must not come,
> For my dead face would vex her after-life."

e poem has been dramatised in London and New

York, was translated into Latin, and into sev different European languages; while in France alo seven translations, most of them annotated, ha been made; and Professor A. Beljame of the Pa University has written a most able study of t versification in Enoch Arden. It is indeed an e cellent piece of work, which for sincerity of feelin distinctness of outline, and restraint in language, m be matched with the poem of Dora; while by co paring it with Aylmer's Field, that appeared in t same volume, we can take a measure both of Tennyso strength and of his imperfections in the delineation contemporary life, outside the field of romance.

The story in Aylmer's Field runs upon the sa theme as in Maud and Locksley Hall, with a variati of plot and circumstance. It reproduces the son what commonplace situation of two playmates, b and girl, who fall in love with each other on reachi the age of indiscretion, whereupon the rich and haugh squire indignantly ejects the young man, breaking the engagement, and breaking his daughter's heart consequence. The lover kills himself, and his broth the parish clergyman, takes the whole miserable aff as his text for a sermon that denounces the idols wealth and pedigree, and shows God's punishment up worldly pride. It might be wished that Tennys whose special talent did not lie in wielding the scour should have perceived that extreme condemnation this particular kind of social injustice is liable to ta a false air of sentiment which embarrasses the i pressive treatment of the situation in poetry.

> "Sir Aylmer Aylmer, that almighty man,
> The county God,"

too conventional a figure, obviously magnified, and s served too long under novel-writers, to be pro-oted into the upper rank of poetical characters; and is ineffectual to write him down "insolent, brainless, artless . . . an old pheasant lord and partridge eeder," for the lash falls in vain on the back of a lous society, to whom worldly considerations for Sir lmer's motives, if not for his manners, appeal with me extenuating force; and who might rejoin that e Lord of Burleigh's marriage with a lowly maiden rned out unhappily. Nor is the morality of the ry indisputable. Is Sir Aylmer's iniquity so deep to justify a poet in bringing down the wrath of God on his head, desolation upon his house, the dilapida-n of his ancient hall, and the extinction of his nily?

"The man became
Imbecile; his one word was 'desolate';
Dead for two years before his death was he:

. . . . . .

Then the great Hall was wholly broken down,
And the broad woodland parcell'd into farms;
And where the two contrived their daughter's good,
Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made his run,

. . . . . .

The slow-worm creeps, and the thin weasel there
Follows the mouse, and all is open field."

rse-pride and the infatuation of social prejudice are t sins dark enough for such a tremendous Nemesis; ey fall rather within the jurisdiction of the con-nptuous satirist, who can sometimes hit the mark in e cutting sentence, as when Swift says that you can l what God thinks of wealth by noticing the kind of ople on whom He thinks fit to bestow it.

CHAPTER V

PASTORALS; TENNYSON'S PHILOSOPHY

LET us turn to another aspect of English life; for his studies from the antique be excepted, no gr English poet has travelled for his subjects more rar beyond his native land than Tennyson. In such poe of rural scenery and character as The May Qu and The Grandmother, we have the annals of village, in youth and age, told with a sweet and seri feeling, in flowing monosyllabic lines that affect a captivate a reader by their freedom from varnishing emphasis. Their composition has not the unconsci simplicity of Auld Robin Gray, where the resembla to a genuine ballad comes from that absence of colo ing adjectives [there is but one in all the eight stanz which is the note of all primitive and popular ve —a woodnote wild that is very seldom caught a domesticated by elaborate culture. Tennyson's gen was essentially cultivated and picturesque; he l on his tints with the artistic design of illuminat the beauty of quiet nature, or he filled in with desc tive particulars in order to produce the scene's gene impression, as in the following stanza:—

"When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the wanin
light
You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at night

When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in
the pool,"

hich is in a style quite different from that of un-
ttered verse-makers.

Yet the plaintive lament of the May Queen for her
oom of early death, and the sadness of old age recall-
ng the memories of youth, are presented with a truth
nd earnestness that touch universal human affections
nd the sense of mortality; and the language is purely
oetical, with the same exclusion of dialect or imita-
on of rustic talk that is seen in all Wordsworth's
astorals. These poems of Tennyson aim at, and do
ot fall far short of, the "simplicity of diction" which
Vordsworth affirmed that he had introduced into
nglish verse as the proper medium for rendering the
ementary feelings of the country-folk and showing the
oetical aspect of common things. Wordsworth's prin-
ple, as explained in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*,
as to choose incidents and situations of rural life, and
describe them as far as possible in the language really
sed by the people, purified, indeed, from grossness
nd uncouth provincialisms. Good prose, he main-
ined, was the proper vehicle for this kind of poetry:
is object was to clothe the thoughts and characters in
ain close-fitting words, adapting the speech to the
tuation. It was not difficult for Coleridge to prove,
the well-known criticism that is to be found in his
iographia Literaria, that language so purified was very
ifferent from the true vulgar tongue; that Wordsworth,
fact, used good plain English vivified and elevated
oetically, and was at his worst in the lines which
ome nearest to commonplace rustic conversation.

Moreover, Wordsworth, though he did good servic in discarding finally the old conventional pastora diverged habitually into philosophic reflections tha were manifestly and intentionally out of keeping wit his rustic characters. In the two poems of The Ma Queen and The Grandmother Tennyson makes n pretence of imitating the language of his villagers his object is to translate their genuine feelings poetic ally; he simplifies his diction and strips it of super fluous ornament; but no man knew better that rea idiomatic vernacular is a very different thing. Wha this is, and the use that can be made of it, he ha shown separately. He does not relate a story an moralise upon it, as Wordsworth usually did; he ex hibits dramatic impersonations that portray the homel joys and griefs of the peasantry, that show how the act and what they say, in language that is neverth less refined, correct, and vivid, and in a style which i the poet's own.

It will perhaps be admitted that this method of leavin his personages to speak for themselves was a novelt in the lyrics of rusticity. In subsequent poems Tenny son went one step further in compliance with th modern demand for what is called realism, by tryin the bold experiment, upon which neither Wordswort nor even Crabbe ever ventured, of making them speak i their own rough unpolished vernacular, as if they wer acting their parts on a stage. This was the final deat blow to the tradition of the elegant pastoral. W have to remember that Burns was the first poet genius who proved that the strenuous racy speech the people contained elements of high poetic valu being of course led to the discovery by the fact that

ready to his hand, for he himself was a poet born
d bred up among the Scottish peasantry. In Scot-
d, as in the New England of America, there existed
rue and widespread provincial dialect, which gave a
ional flavour and local associations to verses in
ich it was used; but in England, the home of
ient literary culture, the writing of verse in dialect
patois had never hitherto been attempted by any of
recognised poets (and they are numerous) who
ve condescended to the short and simple annals of
village.[1] That Tennyson, the mystical romancer,
dreamer of fair women, should also have written
rited verses full of rude and quaint humour, some-
nes even too redolent of the soil, is a notable
mple of his versatility. And his Northern
rmer set the fashion, in England, of drawing
racter-sketches in rough-hewn verse that imitates
only the speech but the accent of all sorts and
ditions of unsophisticated men. It is a form of
trical composition that has lately spread, as a species
modern ballad, throughout the British Empire and
United States of America, but has little or no
stence in any language except the English.[2]
FitzGerald, after reading the "Holy Grail," writes
70) to Tennyson—

"The whole myth of Arthur's Round Table Dynasty in
tain presents itself before me with a sort of cloudy, Stone-
ge grandeur. I am not sure if the old Knight's adventures

William Barnes, who first published his poems in the
rsetshire dialect in 1833, can hardly be ranked among the
her poets.

Such poems as those of Mistral in the *Provençal* dialect
ong, I think, to a different order.

do not tell upon me better, touched in some lyrical way (
your own 'Lady of Shalott'), than when elaborated into
form. . . . Anyhow, Alfred, while I feel how pure, noble,
holy your work is, and whole phrases, lines, and sentence
it will abide with me, and, I am sure, with men after m
read on till the 'Lincolnshire Farmer' drew tears to my e
I was got back to the substantial rough-spun Nature I kn
and the old brute, invested by you with the solemn humou
Humanity, like Shakespeare's *Shallow*, became a more path
phenomenon than the knights who revisit the world in y
other verse."

In the two poems of the Northern Farmer, inde
we have verisimilitude of portraiture and auther
delineation of character, preserving the type
developing its peculiar features by the insi
that belongs to the observing faculty, with arti
fidelity in details. Yet the treatment of these subj
needs much discrimination and reserve; for unless th
is a solid foundation of point and humour, the dia
becomes mere jargon; and the particulars must ne
be *too* inelegant, nor must the verse be overcrow
with phonetic pronunciations. The Northern Cobb
which betrays defects of this kind, must be rank
critically, below the Farmer; and the Village W
has a certain triviality of voluble talk which may
true enough to nature, but hardly supports her cl
to a niche in a poetic gallery of national portraits.

"'Ouse-keeper sent tha, my lass, fur New Squire coom'
last night.
Butter an' heggs—yis—yis. I'll goä wi' tha back; a
right;
Butter I warrants be prime, an' I warrants the heggs b
as well,
Hafe a pint o' milk runs out when ya breäks the shell."

Take away the queer spelling, and turn the lines into ordinary English, and you have commonplace domestic prose hardly worth putting into rhyme. By the same test The Spinster's Sweet-Arts must be reckoned among the less successful excursions into the field of low life, for even there it is dangerous to descend among ignoble particulars, and the Art of Sinking consists in avoiding degradation—

'To be horder'd about, an' waäked, when Molly'd put out the light,
By a man coomin' in wi' a hiccup at ony hour o' the night!
An' the taäble staäin'd wi' 'is aäle, an' the mud o' 'is boots o' the stairs,
An' the stink o' 'is pipe i' the 'ouse, an' the mark o' 'is 'eäd o' the chairs!"

"Roden Noel," writes Tennyson, "calls the two Northern Farmers photography; but I call them imaginative"—as of course they are, being far above mere exact presentations of individuals. And in proportion as photography, the bare indifferent printing off of things as they are, predominates in this kind of work, it becomes no fit business for a master of poetical grace and distinction. Here, again, we may refer to Coleridge's criticism on Wordsworth's Preface, where he (Wordsworth) explains that he has chosen low and rustic subjects, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language. To this Coleridge replies that low and rustic life is in itself unpoetic, and that poetry must idealise. Where Wordsworth does idealise, he says, his figures have the representative quality; where the poet goes too

close to the real native product, as in the "Idiot Boy," he becomes commonplace; and when he describes a du and garrulous man exactly, he becomes himself dul So, also, when Tennyson gives us the vulgar tongue i its full flavour, the poetical element is overpowere and disappears.

But if it must be admitted that passages like thes are blemishes on the picture, "in truth to natur missing truth to art," we may regard them as a overbalance of Tennyson's proclivities, as lapses o the side to which his genius leans. Throughout hi poetry, from the highest to the humblest subject runs a vivid objectivity; he sees things in stron relief, and they are impressed with a sharp edg upon a very receptive mind. Even at the time when he is dropping his plummet into the abyss o the mysteries that encompass human existence an destiny, he rarely carries abstract thought to an depth; he returns to the surface and refreshes him self among the forms of the visible world. Her he is in his proper domain, in his power of exac delineation, of recording briefly the sensation receive and retained, by looking (for example) attentively at wide prospect, and taking out of it the suggestion o the similitudes, reading from it the language or dis course of Nature. And as in his best work he take accurate notice of minor things, of wild flowers an foliage, of a weasel's faint cry or a bird's call, or eve of a cow's wrinkled throat in the play of sunlight, s when he is giving us the rough side of life he ha occasionally fallen into excess of naturalism by hi propensity for minute observation of things that wi not bear inspecting too closely.

Yet his pre-eminent gift was for the imaginative
prehension of beauty, and his practice is exemplified
the record of his journeys. In 1860, for example,
made an excursion to Cornwall and the Scilly
ands, gathering a harvest of impressions from the
ws of the coast, the cliffs, the long curving sweep
the sandy shore, the towering Atlantic breakers,
l jotting down the "nature-similes," which,
ng afterwards grafted into his verse, became the
orative framework that contained and gave a local
pitation to his Arthurian legends. Then he returned
Farringford, with its careless ordered garden close
the edge of a noble down, where his friends visited
n, and listened to his table talk, and heard him
d his poems. In 1861 he was in Auvergne, sur-
ving, for the most part silently, the mountains,
es, and torrents; whence the party travelled south-
rd to the Pyrenees, meeting Arthur Clough at
chon, with continual additions throughout the
rney to the poetic sketch-book. He could thus
in a few words the sensations of the moment,
sh and distinct, storing them for eventual use
ner descriptively, as part of a narrative, or as
taphors to expand and give forms to a thought.
may be noticed, by the way, that the most famous of
nnyson's contemporary poets in France worked by
cisely the same method. Victor Hugo's "Couchers
Soleil" are careful studies from nature of the tones
l forms of a landscape under the setting sun. Both
se great artists sought to fix accurately the scene,
l to translate the momentary sensation into accor-
nce with the thought that it awakened, to use it
the background or environment of human action,

or merely to obtain a fresh image for the poetic embodiment of an idea, in substitution for images that have been worn out or become obsolete by long usage. Metaphor lies at the base of all language; and while the first man who spoke of running water conveyed his thought by an image which invested the stream with a being like his own, the poets latterly resorted to metaphor, or to myth—which is in their hands metaphor personified—as a mere repertory for figurative expression. When the thought at once strikes out the image it comes fresher from the mint than when the image has been noted and treasured up beforehand for illustration of thought or action. It may be observed that Tennyson never uses what may be called the mythological device; he never appeals directly to the ocean or the mountain as if it were a living embodiment of Nature, as Byron does; he absorbs and translates the impress of inanimate things upon the perceptive mind. A year later we find him making similar studies for his poetry from the crags and dismantled castles of Derbyshire and Yorkshire. It would seem that his wandering in the quiet familiar scenery of England served him best in this way, since, if we may judge from a letter written immediately after his return from abroad, his reminiscences of a journey through France were troubled by a kind of resentment against the annoyances that never failed to discompose him in strange lands, and which in this instance appear to have affected his health.

"France, I believe, overset me, and more especially the foul ways and unhappy diet of that charming Auvergne; no amount of granite craters or chestnut-woods, or lava-streams

he Puy de Dôme which I climbed, nor the Glen of Royat
e I lived, nor the still more magnificent view of the dead
noes from the ascent to Mont Dore could make amends
hose drawbacks; so we all fell sick by turns. . . . I
in with a torpid liver, not having much pleasure in
ning."[1]

ertheless the course and circumstances of Tennyson's
dle life were singularly untroubled and uneventful,
ing few turning-points or landmarks for the bio-
her. From straitened means in youth he had now
ed to comparative affluence and the serenity of
ll-ordered home; from distinction within a circle
noice friends to celebrity and eminence among the
s of his century. At Farringford, though his
s of work and meditation were properly set apart,
life was by no means secluded. He had many
ors and guests to whom he dispensed hospitality,
with them held the free discourse and interchange
deas that reveal a man's character and opinions.
natural disposition was toward reserve and toward
rtain taciturnity, that probably came from the
t of reflection and of fastidiousness in the choice
nrase; he spoke with intervals of silence.
fter this manner the record of Tennyson's life runs
dignified tranquillity, varied only by incidents that
t his established and spreading reputation as an
trious man of letters, known by all Englishmen,
whose acquaintance was desired by distinguished
gn visitors to his country. In 1864 he received
arringford Garibaldi, who planted a tree in the
en, and discoursed with him on Italian poetry.
writes to the Duke of Argyll: "What a noble

[1] *Memoir.*

human being! I expected to see a hero, and was
disappointed. When I asked if he returned throu
France, he said he would never set foot on the soil
France again. I happened to make use of the expr
sion, 'That fatal debt of gratitude owed by Italy
Napoleon.' 'Gratitude,' he said; 'hasn't he had
pay, his reward? If Napoleon were dead, I should
glad; and if I were dead, he would be glad.'"[1] A
yet there was prophetic truth in Tennyson's wor
though not as he meant them; for the debt prov
fatal, not to Italy, but to Napoleon, whose attachm
to the cause of Italian liberty drew him into fa
complications that hampered all his foreign policy a
contributed to his eventual downfall. The Longfello
from America, Professor Owen, Queen Emma of
Sandwich Islands, the son of the Abyssinian K
Theodore, who lost life and kingdom in his
with the English, and Mr. Darwin—to whom Tenny
said, "Your theory of Evolution does not make agai
Christianity?" and Darwin answered, "No, certai
not"—may be mentioned to exemplify the vari
of his visitors. We have a journal of a tour
Waterloo, with a careful survey of the battlefi
and thence to Weimar, where the party saw Goet
house, with all his old boots at the entrance,
Goethe's coffin at the Fürstengruft. Tennyson joi
as might have been expected, the Committee for
defence of Governor Eyre, whose figure as
saviour of Jamaica struck the hardy temper of
English people, bringing out their unfailing re
ness to pardon doing too much a great deal m
easily than doing too little in a sharp emerge

[1] *Memoir.*

nd to be amazingly indulgent as to the methods mployed.

In 1867 Tennyson was in negotiation for the land n Blackdown in Surrey, where he afterwards built ldworth, on a site accessible only by a rough track cross the sandy plateau of the down from the lanes bove Haslemere; placing the house on a sheltered dge of the uppermost part of the hill's slope southard, with a broad view over the Sussex weald to e South Downs and the sea, and Leith Hill standing ut on the eastern horizon. Then in 1868-69 he ent abroad with Mr. Frederick Locker, who has left otes on the philosophic discourse, always so attractive Tennyson, that throws many side-lights on his poetry. ome of these reminiscences show his mystical proensity, the habit of ruminating indecisively over peculations which understand all visible things to be gns and shadows of things invisible, the intimations f eternal Power and Divinity.[1] His thoughts also ran pon the limited range of our sense-perceptions, and e relativity of our ideas to our ignorance, on Faith anscending the bounds of Reason, and on his own firm elief in Love, Virtue, and Duty. His mind wavered us over the face of the deep waters, returning ways to the solid ground of human affections and oral obligations, in accordance with the advice of ocrates, that where certainty is unattainable one ould take the best and most irrefragable of human otions, and let this be the raft upon which life's oyage is to be made.

A few lines may be subjoined from the same notes,

[1] St. Paul, *Romans* i. 20.

to show the lighter side of Tennyson's characte so well known to all who had the privilege of hi acquaintance.

"Balzac's remark that 'Dans tout homme de génie il y a u enfant,' may find its illustration in Tennyson. He is the onl grown-up human being that I know of who habitually think aloud. His humour is of the dryest, it is admirable. . . . H tells a story excellently, and has a catching laugh. There ar people who laugh because they are shy or disconcerted, or fo lack of ideas . . . only a few because they are happy o amused, or perhaps triumphant. Tennyson has an entirel natural and a very kindly laugh."[1]

It was, indeed, this vein of simplicity, unsophisticate by conventionality, that often gave unexpected turn to his humour, while it had much to do with preservin that keen sense, or even enjoyment, of ludicrous incon gruities, of the comic effects of indecorum or uncon scious vulgarity, which he himself once noticed i Shakespeare. If his laugh was triumphant, it wa from that sudden glory which Hobbes defines to b the cause of laughter at human imperfections; thoug no one was further above ill-natured scorn than Tenny son, or less prone to harsh judgment upon the ordinar follies and eccentricities of men.

It may be permissible, for the purpose of collatin the impressions made by Tennyson on those who kne him well and saw him often about this time, to ad here an extract from some recollections of his con versation that have been left by Mr. F. Palgrave—

"Every one will have seen men, distinguished in some lin of work, whose conversation (to take the old figure) eithe 'smelt too strongly of the lamp,' or lay quite apart from the art and craft. What, through all these years, struck me abou Tennyson, was that whilst he never deviated into poetic

[1] *Memoir.*

nguage as such, whether in rhetoric or highly-coloured
ırase, yet throughout the substance of his talk the same
ode of thought, the same imaginative grasp of nature, the
me fineness and gentleness in his view of character, the same
rbearance and toleration, the *aurea mediocritas* despised by
ols and fanatics, which are stamped on his poetry, were con-
antly perceptible; whilst in the easy and, as it were, unsought
oiceness, the conscientious and truth-loving precision of his
ords, the same personal identity revealed itself."[1]

Here we have the large serenity of a poet in whom
ears are strengthening his philosophy of everyday
fe, while he was constantly pondering upon the
ysteries which encompass all phenomenal existence.
n the autumn of 1868, as we learn from a note pre-
xed by the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* review to an
rticle, Tennyson and the Rev. Charles Pritchard were
ne guests of Mr. James Knowles; and as the conversa-
on had frequently turned on speculative subjects, it
as suggested that a society might be formed "to dis-
ıss such questions after the manner and with the
eedom of an ordinary scientific society." This pro-
osal was acted upon, with the result that some of the
ading representatives of theological opinion, scientific
search, and philosophic interest came together in the
etaphysical Society, of which Mr. Leslie Stephen has
bserved that four out of five of its members knew
othing of metaphysics. We learn from Mr. Knowles
ıat the plan came first to be set on foot entirely
ırough Tennyson's adhesion to it; and although
ıring the Society's existence of twelve years his
tendance was infrequent—while he usually listened
lently to the debates—one may guess that the papers
ad or discussed on problems that had always occupied

[1] *Memoir.*

his mind must have increased their attraction for hi
and may have influenced the philosophic drift of his su
sequent poetry. His poem on The Higher Pantheis
which he sent to be read before the Society, maintai
the personality of God apart from the visible worl
regarding spiritual beings as somehow incompatib
with matter. The pure Pantheistic idea is a conce
tion of universal Divine immanence, of the infinite i
terpenetrating the finite; but this might be held
exclude the notion of the world's moral governmen
And Tennyson's Higher Pantheism seems to aim
preserving the consciousness of a discrimination b
tween infinite intelligence and the mind, who
perception of the finite world involves, or perha
necessitates, a recognition of infinity beyond—

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the
plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
. . . . . .
Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him."

The soul has broken glimpses of the Divine visio
and the concluding lines—

"And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man
cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?

might be interpreted as leading up to the doctrine
Oriental theosophy—that only by escaping from sens
tion, by liberation from the bodily organs, can the so
attain clear knowledge of or unity with the Divi
Being.

We know from Tennyson's earlier writings that

shadow of despondency and gloom, a sense of the incompleteness and failures of life, darkened his meditations on the condition and prospects of the human race; and his later poems show that he long retained this cloudy outlook upon the world. In 1864 he wrote an unpublished epigram upon "Immeasurable Sadness"; and if a collection were made of his dramatic monologues (which would be well worth doing), we should find that as time went on he dwelt more and more on the unhappiness of mankind. In Locksley Hall and Maud we had the vague dispirited murmuring of youth against the world's hard discipline; but we also had the lyrics of youthful ardour, love, and beauty. In the pastorals we have had the quiet joys and sorrows of the country folk. In his latter-day monologues the tragic view of things appears to spread and deepen; not vague discontent, but actual misery and anguish are his themes; the agony of Rizpah; the remorse, in The Wreck, of one who deserted her husband and lost her child; the vain repentance, in The First Quarrel, of a widow who parted with her husband in foolish anger—

"An' the wind began to rise, an' I thought of him out at sea,
An' I felt I had been to blame; he was always kind to me.
'Wait a little, my lass, I am sure it 'ill all come right'—
An' the boat went down that night—the boat went down that night."

The Children's Hospital is full of pain and tears; while in Despair we have the fury of a man half crazed by misfortune, who has been resuscitated after trying to drown himself. Instead of depicting a mood, a reverie, or a type of character, he now takes up a striking anecdote of actual crime or suffering,

and gives full play to his keen sensibility by a dramatic impersonation of the strongest emotions. The most poignant situation, more powerfully rendered than any other, is in Rizpah, where a mother has gathered up the fleshless bones of her son who has been hanged in chains for a robbery, and she hears the night-wind bring down his piteous cries to her :—

"Wailing, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind—'O mother, come out to me.'
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon stares at the snow.

"We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself drenched with the rain."

It is a cruel story, barely fit for poetry, since the simple facts are so heartrending as to leave little scope for imaginative execution. Yet the long moaning lines have the sound of misery; the details are worked up with unflinching precision; and the sensation of utter grief, beyond all comfort or cure, is very forcibly conveyed. For a comparison of style, between the elaborate and the primitive, we may turn to the tale of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, told in the ancient chronicle with all the power of a few plain words without ornament or commentary; a sight as it was seen on the Syrian hills, when the seven sons of Saul

ere hanged in propitiation of divine wrath, to stay ie famine.

If we may now endeavour to sketch out some eneral view of Tennyson's attitude toward the great roblems of human existence, it becomes necessary b read together, in this connection, the poems that e published at different times in his later years. n Tennyson's Rizpah we have a helpless woman rushed by a calamity that she could not avert; our ompassion for her is unqualified. In Despair, on he other hand, we have a case of mental pathology; re are back again among intellectual difficulties: we ave to consider the ethics of the situation, and to uspend our sympathy until we can satisfy ourselves hat a man deserves it who would fling away his own ife and his wife's because he has lost faith in God, is iiserable in this world, and expects nothing from the vorld to come:—

"He is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a pillar of fire,
The guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow of its desire—
Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the weak trodden down by the strong,
Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre, murder, and wrong."

Here indeed we have the lyric of despair, and the orce of language has been strained to its uttermost pitch in expressing it. Yet we are not so carried away by the rush of the daring verse as to read vithout impatience the violent railing against all hings human and divine by which this poor fellow eeks to excuse a somewhat abject surrender to

misfortune and materialism. Self-respect and th stoical temper unite to disown his behaviour; an the stress laid throughout the poem on the disastrou consequences of unbelief creates a suspicion that the frenzied denunciations are delivered with an eye on a audience; for the desperate half-drowned man mak shrewd hits at infidel science and strikes out again Calvinistic Theology.

"What! I should call on that Infinite Love that has served
us so well?
Infinite cruelty rather that made everlasting Hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and does what he
will with his own;
Better our dead brute mother who never has heard us groan.

An argumentative intention underlies the rhapsod weakens the logic of the situation, and produces a sen of dramatic insincerity. In one single line by Keat "Here, where men sit and hear each other groan there is a deeper echo of human misery than in all th declamation, which belongs rather to the preach than to the poet. But it reflects the shade of alar that seems to have continually darkened Tennyson mind when he brooded over subjects of this kind. religion he was an optimist, holding a firm belief the divine wisdom and goodness; though the aspe and course of Nature appears to have alternate encouraged and disheartened him; her calm beau was seen to cover unmerciful indifference; and form theology brought him no consolation. His imagin tion was haunted by a fear that scientific teachi would extinguish belief in a spiritual life to com and would leave mankind desolate in a vast univers One evening, we are told in the *Memoir*,

was talking on death, and quoting a Parisian story of a having deliberately ordered and eaten a good dinner, and ing afterwards committed suicide by covering his face with hloroformed handkerchief. 'That's what I should do,' he , 'if I thought there was no future life.'"

The remark, though recorded, can hardly have been de seriously; but it contains in essence the sentiment of his poem "Despair," the sombre conception of simism as almost a justification of suicide. Unless miserable condition of the masses can be improved—if want, unhappiness, and squalor are indicable, as they seem to be—the world, for the ater number of mankind, may as well end at once tead of rolling on through immense periods. And n if we are gradually advancing to a higher and ppier life for all, what is the use of Progress if its end o be a final extinction of all animated existence upon s planet? These are the two currents of thought t appear to have perplexed Tennyson's meditans, and to run through such poems as Despair, and ough "Locksley Hall Sixty Years after"[1]—

s it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street."

d he still harps, in the same poem, on his feeling the inutility of human effort, on his fear lest the minion of science should deaden our spiritual aspira-

[1] 1887.

tions; he reminds us that our transitory existen in time is little worth, that progress and huma perfectibility are illusions, and the world's histo a tale of unmeaning bustle and agitation, signifyi nothing, unless we keep alive the spiritual instinc and the hope of immortality—

"Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true as was brave;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd beyo the grave,
Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death as lo of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the pall!

. . . . . .

Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race bega
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man.

. . . . . .

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the Tr the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crum into dust."

The stanzas have the rhythmic swell and regul fall of a chant by some prophetic seer looking bac ward and forward over the procession of ages, t spectator of all time and all existence, who distru the advance of civilisation, disdains mere physi betterment, and foretells dire conflicts in whi the nobler qualities of man may perish in str against misrule and sensuality. Toward the e comes a gentler and more hopeful note; yet t burden of the poem is still, as with In Memoria the oppressive immensity of space and time, in whi religions and philosophic systems are lost like plan in an ocean, and those who cling to them are toss about until they drop into the depths—

rward, backward, backward, forward, in the immeasurable sea,
ay'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to you or me.

l the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable man,
an or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

. . . . . .

hat are men that He should heed us? cried the king of sacred song;
sects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong,

hile the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery way,
l their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

any an Æon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,
any an Æon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn."

mong these illimitable periods a life of seventy or ty years is as nothing, and human efforts and rations sink into insignificance; yet the old squire the consolation that it is something to have had s day, to have shared the lot of mankind and to e helped one's neighbours, and to stand at life's e in the old house, which is full of early memories joy and sorrow. And so falls the curtain on ksley Hall, the conclusion of a romantic drama runs in a fragmentary way through so many Tennyson's poems. If we connect the scattered s, we have the conception of fretful youth with ent hopes and ambitions, of a passionate attach- t that is broken off rudely and violently, of revolt nst social injustice, of long wrestling with the

spectres of intellectual doubt and depression,
gradual schooling under the world's hard discipli
and of an old age passing quietly amid the scenes
boyhood, still troubled by the unintelligible enig
of the Universe, but with a softened retrospect o
the past, and with such resignation as may be
from trusting that the immeasurable course of Evo
tion may tend to some far distant state of rest a
happiness.

In Vastness[1] the figure of individual man has
appeared, and we have the same gloomy panorama
human energy and suffering contemplated from
point of its utter vanity and nothingness. The
organ-notes reverberate in lines that touch the high
scale of sublimity and grandeur in Tennyson's ver
but the poem is too heavily charged with contras
images, and the light is too lurid—

"Raving politics, never at rest—as this poor earth's
history runs,—
What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam
million million of suns.

. . . . . .

What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy, varying vo
of prayer?
All that is noblest, all that is basest, all that is filthy
all that is fair?

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our
corpse-coffins at last,
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd in the de
of a meaningless Past?"

The feeling that man is but dust and shadow, anima
for a brief moment, that he is born to sorrow,

[1] 1889.

ıt his works perish, is primeval in poetry and in igion; the starry heavens suggested it to the cient sages and preachers no less vividly than all e discoveries of astronomy and geology. They nfronted the eternal silences mournfully, yet with nquil intrepidity; they drew lessons of composure d ethical fortitude from the spectacle; they used it rebuke cowardly fear and superstition. In the East ey relied upon the soul's gradual emancipation until should escape into immateriality from the demon ıt afflicts it with sensation. If the modern poet's agination appears more overpowered by alarm, by kind of terror lest the mainsprings of our moral d spiritual activities should give way, we have consider that the tremendous expansion of the entific record in these latter days seems to have ected Tennyson like a sentence of inflexible prestination, overshadowing his delight in the world's ories by a foreknowledge of its inevitable doom. ıe vision which unrolled itself before his imagination, the blind mechanical evolution of a world "dark th griefs and graves," of human energy squandered a planet that is passing from fire to frost, evidently scinated his mind more and more, and possessed it with smay. That mankind and their works must perish, owly or suddenly, leaving not a wrack behind, has en the warning of all religions, the foundation of all liefs in a future life; and the poem of Vastness ves the same warning in the terms of science, but without the same clear note of intrepidity, or of confidence revealed promises. Yet Tennyson has his antidote Despair. Amid the general shipwreck of positive eeds, formal theologies, political and philosophic

systems, all of them powerless to affect man's ultim
destiny, we have gleams of spiritual illumination s
on the far-distant horizon; we have a profound fa
in the moral direction of cosmic laws, in a spirit
basis of all being, in a kinship and affinity between
spiritual element in man and the divine soul wh
moves the whole universe. He believes with Coleri
that the world of sense is in some manner the ma
festation of supersensual realities. That Love
stronger than Death, and in some form or feel
will survive it, is the idea that was expressed in so
of the most musical and melancholy stanzas of "
Memoriam"—

"Yet if some voice that man could trust
Should murmur from the narrow house,
'The cheeks drop in; the body bows;
Man dies: nor is there hope in dust:'

Might I not say? 'Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive:'
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
'The sound of that forgetful shore
Will change my sweetness more and more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die.'

O me, what profits it to put
An idle case? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut."

d in Akbar's Dream,[1] written many years after-
d, we have the mystic's invocation of Allah as the
of Love—

"But dimly seen
Here, till the mortal morning mists of earth
Fade in the noon of heaven, when creed and race
Shall bear false witness, each of each, no more,
But find their limits by the larger light,
And overstep them, moving easily
Thro' after-ages in the love of Truth,
The truth of Love."

believes that the deepest human affections are signs
symbols of our participation in something divine.
he Ancient Sage, another poem that appeared
ard the close of Tennyson's life, is perhaps the
st indefinite exposition of his hopeful philosophy.
touches here upon the conviction, so prevalent
Oriental mysticism, that the entire phantasmagoria
sense perception is essentially deceptive and unsub-
ntial, an illusion that will vanish with nearer and
arer apprehension of the Divine Presence which
tains the whole system of being—

"If the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark."

e are now in darkness, but larger knowledge may
ne—

"And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
And show us that the world is wholly fair."

e faint recollections that flit through the brain

[1] 1892.

in childhood are described in lines which have Tennyson's delicate susceptibility to the light impressions of the eye or ear—

> "The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
> The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
> As if the late and early were but one—
> A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
> Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost and gone!'
> A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
> Desolate sweetness—far and far away."

It may be a world of flitting shadows, yet there work to be done, and light beyond—

> "Let be thy wail, and help thy fellow men."

Amid the scenes of lust and luxury, which chain do the soul—

> "Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest—beyond
> A hundred ever-rising mountain lines
> And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
> The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
> Strike on the Mount of Vision."

There is hesitation in the Sage's accents; and the p can do little more than enjoin us to follow the gleams light that pierce the clouds which envelop our mor existence. Science threatens to keep us wandering an interminable labyrinth. Yet Science may be symbolical language shadowing forth divine truths cypher by which those who have the key may read, glimpses and occasional rays of light, a message secret encouragement; and Evolution, a theory futile transformations in the physical order, may typical of the upward striving and gradual em cipation of man as a spiritual being. Some su

nclusions as these we can extract and piece together
om Tennyson's later meditations; and if they are not
ways distinct and coherent, we have to remember
at systematic philosophy lies outside the proper
nge of a poet's art or his mission.

In Tiresias the poet goes back again to antiquity,
the legend of the blind prophet who is in communion
th the deities, and who, when Thebes is beleaguered
d about to fall, proclaims the Divine decree that
e man must devote himself to death for the salvation
his state and people. We have in this story the
veterate belief in the efficacy of human sacrifice that
s run through the superstitions of all ages and
untries; it contains the moral idea of self-devotion
ixed up with the notion that the angry gods may
appeased by a precious victim; and the modern
et transfigures the legend into a lofty encomium
on the glory of patriotic martyrdom—

> "My son,
> No sound is breathed so potent to coerce,
> And to conciliate, as their names who dare
> For that sweet mother land which gave them birth
> Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
> Graven on memorial columns, are a song
> Heard in the future; few, but more than wall
> And rampart, their examples reach a hand
> Far thro' all years, and everywhere they meet
> And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
> To mould it into action pure as theirs."

is refreshing, after the dreary visions of a ruined
nd silent world, of the inutility of all human effort,
nd of the cold eschatology predicted by Science, to
ok back again in Tiresias on the ancient world,
a time when men were citizens of a petty state

instead of a vast empire, trained to meet real peri
with fortitude and endurance, thinking always
the fortunes of their people, and knowing nothing
the remote destinies of mankind, nor balancing tw
worlds, the present and the future, against each othe
In such conditions of existence their joys and grief
their fears and hopes, were simple, direct, and co
fined within a narrow compass. As the idea
progress and the perfectibility of society ha
little or no hold on them, so they were not deepl
discomposed by the knowledge that all things a
mutable and transitory. As their minds were neith
troubled by the prospect of an immeasurable futu
for the earth, nor by the discovery of its remote pas
so they could concentrate their efforts and aspiratio
on the ideals which ennoble the present life, on courag
temperance, and justice, on making the best of it
harmonising the inevitable conditions of existence.
the poets and philosophers of antiquity, who knew w
that the highest truths lie beyond experience,
rebellious outburst of Despair and the blank dism
of Vastness would have appeared irrational and p
foundly inconsistent with the sense of duty and virtu
tending to obliterate the distinctions of good and ev
and to degrade all human society to the level of insec

From the prison-house of materialism Tennyson hi
self found release in his firm trust that all things a
divinely ordered, and that annihilation is inconceivabl
yet his reflections on death are constantly tinged wi
misgivings. The verses added as an epilogue
Tiresias have the full spontaneous flow in perfe
measure, with a sure echoing stroke of the rhym
that attest consummate workmanship. In the p

de he had greeted his old friend, Edward FitzGerald: d when he wrote these final stanzas he had heard of s death—

> "The tolling of his funeral bell
> Broke on my Pagan Paradise.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Gone into darkness, that full light
> Of friendship! past, in sleep, away
> By night, into the deeper night!
> The deeper night? A clearer day
> Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—
> If night, what barren toil to be!
> What life, so maim'd by night, were worth
> Our living out? Not mine to me."

The doubtful doom of human kind" haunts his agination; he dwells upon the idea that Song will anish in the Vast, will end in stillness, and he glances ack regretfully at the pagan paradise—at those who

> "Scarce could see, as now we see,
> The man in Space and Time,
> So drew perhaps a happier lot
> Than ours, who rhyme to-day.
> The fires that arch this dusky dot—
> Yon myriad-worlded way—
> The vast sun-clusters' gather'd blaze,
> World-isles in lonely skies,
> Whole heavens within themselves, amaze
> Our brief humanities."

he conclusion, sooner or later, of the human drama, the nality of all earthly existence—these ideas have been e articles of primary belief in every religion, and belong the presentiments and expectations that are natural the human mind, for we are surrounded by decay nd death, and the illimitable is an inconceivable idea.

But in apocalyptic predictions the earth itself w
to be destroyed and disappear with all it containe
was to founder like a ship in mid-ocean, or like
volcanic island sinking suddenly. It is the prospe
of this planet, a minute and negligible part of t
universe, rolling round in its diurnal course after m
and his works have vanished, of inanimate matter su
viving with entire unconcern all vital energies, th
seems to have oppressed the poet with dejection at t
thought of mortal man's utter insignificance. In th
mood life lost for him all interest and meaning, exce
through faith in the perpetuation of the spiritu
particle; and his own quotation from Marvell i
dicates the prevailing bent of his reflections—

> "At my back I always hear
> Time's winged chariot hurrying near,
> And yonder all before us lie
> The deserts of eternity."

To such feelings his poetry gave sublimity and
transcendent range of contemplation; yet it must
remarked that they have a tendency to weigh do
the mainsprings of human activity They are akin
the subtle opiates of Oriental philosophy, which teach
the nothingness of sensuous life; but fortunately t
energetic races of the world are not easily discourag
For it is the inevitability of death that gives
stimulus to life; and strenuous minds draw a mot
for exertion, for working while the light lasts, fr
that very sense of the brevity of human existence a
the uncertainty of what may lie beyond, which, althou
Tennyson fought against it manfully, did undoubted
haunt his meditations and depress the spirit of his la
inspirations. He relied, indeed, upon the sense

right, of duty, and of trust in the final purpose of a Creator; nevertheless, he seems to have been continually disturbed by the fear lest the scientific forecast of blank desolation for this planet, and the uncertainty of a future conscious existence for mankind, might fatally weaken the power of these high motives to fortify human conduct, and to sustain virtue. Yet in the four volumes of Jowett's *Plato*, which he received from the translator in 1871, he must have found—not only in the dialogues, but also in Jowett's characteristic commentaries—that loftier conception of service in the cause of truth and humanity, which can inspire men to go forward undauntedly, whatever may be their destiny beyond the grave.

In discussing Tennyson's poetry and his intellectual tendencies it has been necessary to disregard chronological sequence and to anticipate, for the purpose of a connected survey. We must now take up again the chronicle of his elder life, which is very slightly marked by events, except when increasing years brought ever-rising fame and public honours. In 1869 he was made an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; and in 1873 Mr. Gladstone proposed a baronetcy, but such promotion had evidently no attraction for him. In 1874 this offer was repeated by Mr. Disraeli (who does not seem to have been aware that it had been already made) in a high-flying sententious letter, evidently attuned to the deeper harmonies of the mysterious relations between genius and government.

"A government should recognize intellect. It elevates and sustains the spirit of a nation. But it is an office not easy to

fulfil; for if it falls into favouritism and the patronage of mediocrity, instead of raising the national sentiment, it might degrade and debase it. Her Majesty, by the advice of Her Ministers, has testified in the Arctic expedition, and will in other forms, her sympathy with science. But it is desirable that the claims of high letters should be equally acknowledged. This is not so easy a matter, because it is in the nature of things that the test of merit cannot be so precise in literature as in science. Nevertheless, etc., etc." [1]

The honour was nevertheless again respectfully declined, with a suggestion, pronounced by authority to be impracticable, that it might be reserved for conferment upon his son after his own death.

Mrs. Tennyson's journal for this time—when they lived alternately between Farringford and Aldworth, making an annual visit to London—is full of interest, recording various sayings and doings, conversation, correspondence, anecdotes, and glimpses of notable visitors—Tourguéneff, Longfellow, Jenny Lind, Huxley, and Gladstone, to the last of whom he read aloud the Holy Grail. At the house of G. H. Lewes he read Guinevere, which made George Eliot weep; and at home he was visited by General Charles Gordon, to whom the poems were a solace and a delight in perilous days at Khartoum. There was a project of bringing about a meeting with Newman, between whom and Tennyson an exchange, or possibly a collision, of philosophic ideas would have been well worth recording; but nothing came of it, and the meeting remains a good subject for an Imaginary Conversation. For Tennyson's table-talk at this period readers must go to the *Memoir*, from which it would be unfair to

[1] *Memoir.*

k many sayings or anecdotes wherewith to season se pages. He had much of the epigrammatic culty; he could condense a criticism into a few rds, as when he said that Miss Austen understood e smallness of life to perfection; he could put colour o it, as when he remarks that poets enrich the ood of the world; and he could frame a thought, t always in itself very precious, with great felicity. amusing anecdotes that struck his fancy, or were llected by his friends to show the wide popularity of s poems, there are many; for at Farringford he was e cynosure of neighbouring eyes, while he was hunted tourists abroad, and at home the visitors sat at his et. He had indeed at this time to pass the ordeal somewhat unqualified adulation, though one intimate iend, Mrs. Cameron, never failed to speak out her ind. His discourses on poetry, with his favourite iotations, prove a keen discrimination of literary iality, with a mastery of technique that is the gift a practical artist. Among his quotations may be ticed, as a curiosity, the lines from *Henry VIII.*[1]:—

> "To-day, the French,
> All clinquant, all in gold, like heathen gods,
> Shone down the English; and, to-morrow, they
> Made Britain, India,"

here Shakespeare, in his large manner of illustrating e Oriental glitter of the English array on the Field the Cloth of Gold, writes as one suddenly possessed the

> "prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,"

[1] Act I. Scene i.

and falls unconsciously into a vision of the futu
For nearly two centuries later it was the conte
between France and England in the East that d
actually and directly lead to the making of Briti
India.

The diary is a faithful and valuable memorial
English country life at its best toward the last quart
of the nineteenth century. Living quietly with h
family, he was in constant intercourse with the mo
distinguished men of his day, and was himself honour
of them all; a society that gave him all that
desired, and not more than he most undoubted
deserved.

In 1878 came the marriage of his younger s
Lionel to Miss Locker. Seven years afterward,
1885, they made a journey to India, where Lion
unfortunately caught a fever of which he died
the homeward voyage. Tennyson's verses To t
Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, always the mo
largehearted and generous of friends, acknowled
the kindness and unmeasured hospitality which h
son received during his illness from the Viceroy
India—

> "But while my life's late eve endures,
> Nor settles into hueless gray,
> My memories of his briefer day
> Will mix with love for you and yours."

With Carlyle Tennyson remained in constant int
course personally, and with FitzGerald by letters, e
cept for a short visit to him at Woodbridge in 1876
"the lonely philosopher, a 'man of humorous-mela
choly-mark,' with his gray floating locks, sitting amo
his doves." They never met again afterwards. It i

rarity in modern life that two such men as Tennyson and FitzGerald, whose mutual friendship was never shaken, should have met but once in twenty-five years of life, although divided by no longer space than could be traversed by a three hours' railway journey. In FitzGerald's judgment Tennyson reached the grand climacteric of his poetry in the volumes of 1842, for the Idylls, and the later moral and didactic strain of verse, were not to his taste; though in 1873 he wrote to Tennyson, who had sent him Gareth and Lynette, that he admired many passages in the Idylls. It may be true, as is remarked in the *Memoir*, that FitzGerald's sequestered way of life kept him in a critical groove, and that he was crotchety is confessed by himself. Nevertheless, in the unanimous chorus of applause from all the illustrious men of that time, the dissentient voice of the scholarly recluse, always admiring and affectionate, was worth listening to; and many may question whether the settled opinion of a later generation will find much fault with it.

CHAPTER VI

THE PLAYS

When Tennyson, in 1875, brought out his play of Queen Mary, he made his entry upon a field into which no first-class English poet had ventured for a long time previously. Coleridge's play of Remorse had a fair run, because it was written down to the level of popular taste; and his poetic genius had little to do with its success. Shelley and Byron wrote dramatic poetry, and Shelley believed that The Cenci was well fitted for the stage, but it never appeared on the boards, although the figure of Beatrice is undoubtedly drawn with great tragic power. Byron openly declared that his dramas were not written with the slightest view to the stage; and, in short, we must go back to Goldsmith for a poet who was also a successful playwright. None of these poets had taken their plots or characters from English history; so that there was novelty in Tennyson's design of continuing the line of Shakespeare's English chronicle-plays by dramatising great periods of our history. In France the historic drama came in for a few years with Victor Hugo and the romanticists; yet it may be affirmed that no French dramatist of the first order has ever founded a play on the annals of France; and we may suppose that the classic taste and style, which rejects details and local colouring, dealing in noble sentiments rhetori-

y delivered, had discouraged and thrown out of ion any attempt to exhibit on the stage famous ional events and personages, surrounding them with variety of character and circumstance that belong real life. Mrs. Tennyson notes in her diary for ril 1874 that her husband had thought of William Silent as the subject for a play; but had said that own history was so great, and that he liked English jects and knew most about them, so that he had un Queen Mary.

From the point of view taken in the foregoing ervations, therefore, we have a new departure in s play, which introduces us to that most critical ch in the history of the English people, when violent gious changes, a doubtful succession to the crown, foreign marriages had spread terror, suspicion, and cord throughout England and Scotland, producing t fermentation of conspiracies, rebellions, and per- utions which is generated by a mixture of religion politics at a high temperature. The cardinal nt of the situation was that in the middle of the teenth century the successions to both the English Scottish crowns had fallen to daughters; and that s had occurred almost simultaneously with the mination of the great revolt against the Papacy, h the fierce religious wars in western Europe, and h the contest between France and Spain for ascend- y. The Emperor Charles V. married his son to ry Tudor of England in order to secure an English ance. As a counter move, Henry II. of France rried the Dauphin to Mary Stuart of Scotland; and the two Catholic queens, representing antagonistic itics, were ruling two kingdoms, in both of which

a powerful party of nobles, with strong popu
support, were stubborn adherents of the Reformati

> "Mary of Scotland, married to your Dauphin,
> Would make our England, France;
> Mary of England, joining hands with Spain,
> Would be too strong for France."[1]

No more arduous or complicated position, sure to deve
character, has fallen to the lot of women than tha
either Queen. Mary Stuart's life and death w
infinitely the more romantic and pitiful; a beaut
frail woman swept onward as if by Fate to death
the scaffold, a sacrifice to implacable policy, ful
the highest conditions of a tragic drama. Shakespe
might have written it, if she had not been so nearly
his own time. On the other hand, there is no roman
no play of wild passion, no fateful catastrophe, in
life of Mary Tudor; she had a touch of her fath
courage, but also of his cruelty; she was a dull wom
with no feminine charm; her reign was one l
failure; and she left the grand part in history to
taken up and played royally by her sister Elizabe
One might therefore say that Tennyson, in fixing u
Queen Mary and her reign, had chosen a diffi
subject for the theatre, since the leading characte
neither heroic nor intensely pathetic; she was a mi
able disappointed woman whose name has an indel
stain of blood upon it. Nevertheless Tennyson's p
is a dramatic reading of authentic history, execu
with much animation and with imaginative force
the presentation of character. Although the inte
in the story belongs rather to the events and circ

[1] Act I. Scene v.

nces than to the persons, yet the poet fills in skilfully historic outlines; he gives elevation to the speeches sentiments; he realises for us the motives and ions of men and women who paid forfeit for a lost se at the stake or on the scaffold; he exhibits ly pictures of the court and the street. He con-ves to invest Mary with some dignity, and to extract m us some scanty sympathy with her unhappiness; ugh it is impossible to make of her the central ure on which the eyes of an audience should be eted as the action proceeds. The main interest is her political than personal. Cranmer, Gardiner, yatt, White the Lord Mayor, Paget and Pole, ailles and Renard, pass over the stage and discharge eir historical parts in speeches full of concise and aracteristic expression; but to bring all these parts o dramatic unity, and to make an imaginative t out of a page of familiar history, was probably yond the power even of first-rate genius. Tennyson nself perceived that the older chronicles, which pre-ved only the striking features of the time, allowed eater scope to the creative faculty than a precise owledge of men and events which binds a poet down the facts, for the necessity of being accurate im-rs the illusion; and the historical dramatist finds nself more at ease in a distant half-known age, or ywhere else than in his own country. Mary Stuart d Mary Tudor have been brought on the stage by eigners, Schiller and Victor Hugo, in the latter case th indifferent success. Moreover, although local ours and circumstantial details give the scenes a listic impressiveness, they rather detract from the iversality, so to speak, which is the attribute of a

great drama. Shakespeare's finest plays are ind pendent of and disregard such accessories.

Nevertheless the portrait painting, under the inevitable limitations, is very well done, and illuminates an eventful period. The priests, stat men, and martyrs of Mary's short and troubled rei stand out in clear relief; the strong light thrown up their figures discloses the intrigues and clashing polit of a time when the balance seemed to hang even b tween the old faith and the new, just when the Spani marriage was adding a heavy weight to the side Rome. Paget, Howard, Wyatt, and Bagenhall present the Englishman of that day for whom religi was a question of politics. Pole, Bonner, and Gardin are the ecclesiastics for whom political power was instrument for the enforcement of religious conformit Mary and Elizabeth are the royal impersonations the two parties, both princesses of the Tudor bloo with the inherited courage that rises to emergenci but Mary has the foreign strain of bigotry, wh Elizabeth, a full Englishwoman, has an instincti understanding of and fellow-feeling with the r temper of her countrymen. On the whole Tennys does Mary more than justice; for he uses the licen of a dramatist to endow her with much more ener of speech and action than she can really have possess and to impart a fierce glow to her gloomy fanaticism

Mary:

O God! I have been too slack, too slack;
There are Hot Gospellers even among our guards—
Nobles we dared not touch. We have but burnt
The heretic priest, workmen, and women and children.
Wet, famine, ague, fever, storm, wreck, wrath,—

We have so play'd the coward ; but by God's grace,
We'll follow Philip's leading, and set up
The Holy Office here—garner the wheat,
And burn the tares with unquenchable fire.[1]

ecil's brief reflections, after conversing with Elizabeth, ark the contrast—

"Much it is
To be nor mad, nor bigot—have a mind—
Not let Priests' talk, or dream of worlds to be,
Miscolour things about her—sudden touches
For him, or him—sunk rocks ; no passionate faith—
But—if let be—balance and compromise ;
Brave, wary, sane to the heart of her—a Tudor
School'd by the shadow of death—a Boleyn, too,
Glancing across the Tudor—not so well."[2]

ne passage is a model of laconic expression, indicating pid and concentrated thought. In the general diction this play the absence of ornament is remarkable; e poet has put a curb on his fancy, and has stripped s English for the encounter of keen wits occupied in airs of State; the priests, politicians, and soldiers aste no words. Yet we have here and there familiar uches of the picturesque, as in Wyatt's reference to s father—

yatt :

Courtier of many courts, he loved the more
His own gray towers, plain life and letter'd peace,
To read and rhyme in solitary fields,
The lark above, the nightingale below,
And answer them in song.[3]

so in the rendering of that well-known story of yatt reconnoitring the breach in London Bridge,

[1] Act v. Scene v. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Act II. Scene i.

whereby he was cut off from the city, was forced
march round by Kingston, and failed in his enterpris

> "Last night I climb'd into the gate-house, Brett,
> And scared the gray old porter and his wife.
> And then I crept along the gloom and saw
> They had hewn the drawbridge down into the river
> It roll'd as black as death; and that same tide
> Which, coming with our coming, seem'd to smile
> And sparkle like our fortune as thou saidst,
> Ran sunless down, and moaned against the piers."[1]

The play of "Harold," which followed next in
"historical trilogy,[2]" takes us back to a period wh
history is still blended with romance; so that
dramatist could let loose the reins of his imaginati
and could fashion his characters at pleasure within
broad outlines of tradition. He has thus escaped fr
the bonds of exactitude; he can be more poetic; he
even avail himself of the privilege, which is legitim
when used moderately, of giving a turn of mod
sentiment to the language of personages belonging
a distant century. Yet Tennyson has nowhere in t
play done violence to historic probabilities in his
lineation of character and situation; he takes the m
incidents, such as the detention of Harold in Norman
until he had solemnly sworn to acknowledge and as
William's claim to the English crown, the death
Edward the Confessor, the battles of Stamford Bri
and Senlac, and composes them into dramatic scene
an artist might paint pictures of them. The dialo
between Harold and his brother Wulfnoth, when b
are prisoners of the Norman at Bayeux, and wh

[1] Act II. Scene iii.
[2] Mary, Harold, Becket. *Memoir*, vol. ii. p. 173.

Vulfnoth is imploring Harold to obtain their liberty y swearing fealty to William, has striking and finely ersified passages; the pressure of conflicting feelings s well rendered. Will Harold yield and set them free or the sake of Edith whom he loves? He is touched eeply. Or for the sake of England?

Harold: Deeper still.
Vulfnoth:

And deeper still the deep-down oubliette,
Down thirty feet below the smiling day—
In blackness—dogs' food thrown upon thy head.
And over thee the suns arise and set,
And the lark sings, the sweet stars come and go,
And men are at their markets, in their fields,
And woo their loves and have forgotten thee;
And thou art upright in thy living grave,
Where there is barely room to shift thy side.[1]

n this passage, as generally throughout the play, the etrical execution is superior to that of Queen Mary. he whole piece, indeed, is written on a higher poetic evel; the language of the dialogues and speeches has certain grandeur that was inadmissible in the mouths f the sixteenth-century notables, who were obliged to peak by the book; and the portrait of a noble warrior nd patriot king is romantically enlarged out of the im records of an unlettered age. In the final Act we ave Harold going forth to the battle, the meeting of he armies, and Edith with the Saxon bishop watching he sway of a well-matched contest, until Harold falls: he intense excitement of the situation is powerfully uggested. The visions that pass through Harold's ream as he sleeps in his tent on the night before

[1] Act II. Scene ii.

Senlac, have an obvious precedent in Shakespeare Richard III.; nor is the chant of the monks durin the fight quite an original dramatic invention, yet the are both skilfully adapted to enhance the impression the crisis. But the concluding speech of William th Conqueror over the bodies of Harold and his mistres Edith, is somewhat marred by the introduction of moral sentiment that sounds too much out of charact with the time—

William: Leave them. Let them be!
Bury him and his paramour together.
He that was false in oath to me, it seems
Was false to his own wife. We will not give him
A Christian burial.

And possibly Tennyson did not at the moment recolle that William's mother had been just such anoth paramour as Edith.

It will have been noticed that the Trilogy tak no account of chronological order. If, at any rat the play of Becket, which appeared last in the serie being published in 1884, had preceded Queen Mar we should have seen the first beginning, und the Plantagenets, of the quarrel between Rome a the English State which came to a final brea under the Tudors. The *Memoir* inserts a declarati of the late Mr. J. R. Green, no light authority, th all his researches into the annals of the twelf century had not given him so vivid a concepti of the character of Henry II. and his Court as w embodied in Tennyson's Becket. Whether this a superior quality in historic plays, may be open argument; and at any rate one may demur respe fully to the rule laid down in a letter written on th

ay to its author by Mr. Bryce, that "truth in history naturally truth in poetry."[1] For accuracy of reproıction, though it gratifies the realistic demands of the resent time, and gives pleasure to the cultivated reader, ust have a tendency to cramp the imaginative freeom that wings the flight of dramatic genius; and me historical plays and romances of the first order ound with inaccuracies. Nevertheless the rule may applicable to delineation of character; and in his vo principal personages, Henry II. and Becket, Tennyn has embroidered upon the historic canvas with rce and fidelity. The subject lends itself to dramatic mposition by providing for the leading personage an clesiastical hero, the Archbishop, who overtops all e others, marking the central line of interest throughıt; and whose violent death in the cause that he ıpersonates supplies a fitly tragic ending to the play. hen, also, the story of Rosamond and Eleanor provides st the romantic element of secret love and feminine ndictiveness that is needed to soften and vary the rsh disputing, the interchange of threats and curses, tween priests and barons; and to Tennyson's skill seizing and working upon these points of vantage e may attribute largely the success of this piece on the stage. The language, as in Queen Mary, is norous and masculine, the dialogues are pointed in rust and parry; and one or two important speeches ve a stately tone well suited to their occasion.

enry:

Barons and bishops of our realm of England,
After the nineteen winters of King Stephen—
A reign which was no reign, when none could sit
By his own hearth in peace; when murder, common

[1] *Memoir.*

As nature's death, like Egypt's plague, had filled
All things with blood, when every doorway blushed,
Dashed red with that unhallowed passover;
When every baron ground his blade in blood;
The household dough was kneaded up in blood;
The mill-wheel turned in blood, the wholesome plow
Lay rusting in the furrow's yellow weeds,
Till famine dwarft the race—I came, your king.[1]

In the scene where Queen Eleanor has tracked Rosa mond through the labyrinth to her bower, threatens t kill her, and offers life to her on base terms, Rosamond after kneeling for mercy, at last turns upon the Quee and replies in the right tragic spirit—

Rosamond: I am a Clifford,
My son a Clifford and Plantagenet,
I am to die then. . . .
Both of us will die.
And I will fly with my sweet boy to heaven,
And shriek to all the saints among the stars:
Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of England!
Murdered by that adulteress Eleanor,
Whose doings are a horror to the east,
A hissing in the west.[2]

It is a play that won not only the cordial commend tion of scholars and men of letters, but also popula applause, and the foremost of our English theatric artists willingly joined in giving it adequate repr sentation; with the result that it held the stag beyond fifty nights, and Sir Henry Irving has said tha Becket is one of the three successful plays produce by him at the Lyceum. The common remark tha Tennyson was no born dramatist cannot be gainsaid he was essentially a lyrical poet; and the lyric vei

[1] Act I. Scene iii. [2] Act IV. Scene ii.

eing different in kind and charged with self-consciousess, has to be suppressed or carefully controlled in ramatic composition, which must be entirely objective nd impersonal. This necessity manifestly presses ith peculiar weight upon the writer of plays that are ntended to be illustrations of authentic history, where he limits of character-probability have to be observed; or the dramatist could not put fanciful ideas of his wn into the mouth of Philip of Spain or Cranmer, nd must curtail his lyrical exuberance. We may herefore admire the versatility of Tennyson's powers n the restraint which he placed upon his natural ropensity; his plays are not poems in his own anner arranged dramatically, like Mr. Swinburne's othwell; nor are they romances cut up into ialogue; they are severe and strenuous presentations f real people and well-known events. This may e counted both as praise and dispraise; for somehow drama that is closely tied to facts lacks universal nterest; it cannot rise far above the ground, nor tain the heights that secure for it a permanent lace in the national literature. Yet if Tennyson as not succeeded in the arduous and probably opeless enterprise of reviving the historical drama, e deserves credit and sympathy for attempting it; nd he has set an example, which is being followed n the romantic drama by a younger poet of his chool in the present[1] day, of endeavouring to stem he downward current of deterioration in the taste of he playgoing public, by offering them plays of fine rtistic quality and form, dealing seriously with nomentous events and deep emotions, at a time

[1] Mr. Stephen Phillips.

when the national theatre is more and more reduced to ringing changes upon the trivial and commonplace situations of ordinary society.

The Promise of May takes very different ground. It was written somewhat unwillingly (we are told in the *Memoir*) "at the importunate entreaty of a friend who had urged Tennyson to try his hand on a modern village tragedy." This is a pastoral play, on a well-worn theme—the ruin of a farmer's pretty daughter who has been captivated by the superior manners and pretentious talk of a young man belonging to the class of gentlefolk. When he appears on the stage with a book in his hand, we know from his first words what is coming; we can see that Tennyson is fetching another blow at the idol of materialism—

(*Enter Edgar, reading*):

This author, with his charm of simple style
And close dialectic, all but proving man
An automatic series of sensations,
Has often numbed me into apathy
Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road,
That breaks off short into the abysses—made me
A quietist, taking all things easily.

The conviction, which throughout haunted Tennyson, that in default of a clear and certain prospect of immortality a man's soul may be lost utterly, that he must sink into sensuality, and cannot indeed be much blamed for it logically, is the moral exemplified in this play. It comes out in Edgar's excuse for seducing and deserting the girl—

Edgar: What can a man then live for but sensations,
Pleasant ones? Men of old could undergo
Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones
Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties waiting

To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.
For me, whose cheerless Houris after death
Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones—the while,
If possible, here, to crop the flower and pass.

Farmer Dobson: Well, I never 'eard the likes of that afoor.

'or has any one else, in a London theatre. We have ere the recurrent idea that scientific knowledge saps nd destroys the basis of morality, and lets loose all ne unruly affections of sinful men. Marriage is to dgar an obsolete tradition—

Edgar: When the man,
The child of evolution, flings aside
His swaddling bands, the morals of his tribe,
He, following his own instincts as his God,
Will enter on the larger golden age;
No pleasure there tabooed.

his is scarcely a persuasive way of wooing a simple veetheart, and Eva, the farmer's daughter, is naturly puzzled, while Dobson, Edgar's rival, is mortally ıspicious of him; and at the end the materialist turns ıt a double-dyed villain, who gets off much too ıeaply. The didactic strain is evidently out of ıace in a pastoral, save for the occasionally comic fect of an evolutionist discoursing among bamboozled rmers and ploughmen—an incongruous figure, rought in to be battered. And the thread that olds together the action and the personages is too ight. But the rural scenery and the talk of the easantry bring out Tennyson's genuine knowledge country life, and this part of the dialogues is, as all Tennyson's plays, alert and amusing. On its rst night the piece was received in a contentious pirit by the audience at The Globe, chiefly, as the

Memoir mentions, because it had been advertised as a attack against Socialism; "the public had mistaken it purpose." Yet although an experienced playwrigh declared at the time that he could have made it signal success, it is difficult to believe that a travest of moral philosophy (and, to be theatrically popula it *must* be travestied) could ever have helped to su tain Tennyson's reputation as a dramatic author.

The other minor plays of Tennyson are of a differen and brighter cast. In December 1879 The Falco was produced at the St. James's theatre, and held th stage sixty-seven nights; it is a mediæval love-stor belonging to the class of ingenious *fabliaux*, told i the Decameron of Boccaccio, afterwards used by L Fontaine, and lastly arranged by Tennyson as metrical drama in one scene. Fanny Kemble likene it to one of A. de Musset's light pieces, though it ha not his sparkling wit. A lady makes a sudden vis to the knight who has been vainly wooing her. H must offer her some refreshment, so he is forced to ki his favourite falcon to provide a solitary dish; bu she had come to demand of him for her son this ver bird; and he has to confess that she has eaten[1] i Such a sacrifice to love so touches the lady's hea that she marries him. The Cup, on the other hand is in a graver vein, expanded from a story by Plutarc of a Galatian lady in the time of the Roman republi who escapes a forced marriage by poisoning herse and a Galatian noble, Synorix, the traitor to h country, who had joined the conquering Romans an

[1] Hélas, reprit l'amant infortuné,
L'Oiseau n'est plus, vous en avez dîné.
(*La Fontaine.*)

ad murdered her husband. The political situation of province just subdued by the Republic forms a good ackground to the action and gives it verisimilitude, or the story rings true as an incident that might well ave happened in the circumstances. The characters re lightly yet distinctly set, with the strong emotions oetically expressed; and when we learn that Irving ith the best English actress took the leading parts, ith magnificently decorative scenery, it is easy to nderstand why The Cup had the longest run in ngland of all Tennyson's dramatic pieces.

Last of all, The Foresters was brought out on the ew York stage in 1892, when it received a hearty elcome from the Americans, for whom this reminisence of early English woods and wolds may have come ke a breath of fresh air to their crowded rectangular reets. This play has the advantage of keeping ell outside authentic history; for though Tennyson rote of it that he had "sketched the state of the eople in another great transition period of the aking of England," he has luckily done nothing of e kind, but has given us the famous figures of opular tradition, handed down by the minstrels and ymers, in a new and lively dress. Undoubtedly ese legends reflect the feelings and sympathies of the nglish people at a time when the great midland rests sheltered bands of daring men, who defied the orman law and kept up a sort of guerilla against the reign yoke; and this is an atmosphere much more vourable to a romantic woodland drama than the imate of history. The introduction of Titania with her iries (suggested, probably for scenic effect, by Irving) a somewhat temerarious device, not only for the

obvious reason that they have been created once fo all by a master-hand, but also because the pure magica touch was not in Tennyson; nor was his verse ligh enough for fantastic spriteliness, or his playfulnes sufficiently volatile.

Titania: I, Titania, bid you flit,
And you dare to call me Tit.
First Fairy: Tit for love of brevity,
Not for love of levity.
Titania: Pertest of our flickering mob
Wouldst thou call my Oberon Ob?

Moreover, Thomas Love Peacock's Maid Marian, wit its exquisite snatches of song and ballad, and th richer humour of its dialogue, had already traverse the same ground in prose. But at the end of Th Foresters Tennyson's special qualities of picturesqu suggestion and reverie come out in the dreamy melodious lines that drop the curtain on a visio of primitive romance.

Marian: And yet I think these oaks at dawn and even
Will whisper evermore of Robin Hood;
We leave but happy memories in the forest.
. . . . . .
You, good friar,
You Much, you Scarlet, you dear Little John,
Your names will cling like ivy to the wood.
And here, perhaps, a hundred years away,
Some hunter in day dreams or half asleep
Will hear our arrows whizzing overhead,
And catch the winding of a phantom horn.

CHAPTER VII

HE LAST YEARS AND LATEST POETRY: CONCLUSION

1883 a peerage was offered by the Queen to ennyson, who after some hesitation consented, under adstone's advice, to accept it. He took his seat, the st representative in the House of Lords of a purely erary qualification, in 1884; and in the same year he ted for the Franchise Bill, having stipulated with adstone and obtained a pledge that a Bill for the distribution of constituencies should follow. The easure he held to be just and necessary, though adstone received from him a verse of warning ainst setting the troubled waters of politics toward precipitate channel. Their views upon public affairs on afterward fell more and more asunder; and we d Tennyson writing that he loved Gladstone, but ted his Irish policy; while the poet's natural dis- ust of 'rash innovators' shows itself repeatedly in his discourse upon the constitutional questions of is time.

The years of his declining life were passed between s two country houses, with excursions into the untry, visits to London, and occasional cruises in a end's yacht. He received old friends and privileged ests with kindly hospitality; talked on politics, igion, and poetry; spoke of men whom he had

known, scenes that he remembered, and books that
had read; received letters out of all lands, and repl
to some of them with epigrammatic brevity. He v
still occupied with the leisurely composition of
later poems.

From 1885 Tennyson had published, at interva
three small volumes of poems, beside Locksley H
Sixty Years Afterward. One line in this poem
author held to be the best of the kind that he h
ever written—

"Universal Ocean softly washing all her warless isles,"

though it is full of the sibilants that vex all Engl
verse-makers; and the suggestion that the sea wo
become calm when the land should be at peace may
thought logically perplexing. It was but seasona
that Tennyson's latest poetry should have been ting
with autumnal hues. The range of his mind had b
widened by constant assimilation with the expans
of scientific knowledge, and by long experience of
world; but as far horizons often produce a vag
sadness, so his retrospective views of life, as he tu
back and surveys it, are melancholy. In poetry a
in prose the sequel to a fine original piece, writ
after a long interval, has very rarely, if ever, b
successful; though the second part is often valuable
the biographer by illustrating the alterations of st
and thought that follow naturally the course of yea
Tennyson himself said that "the two Locksley H
were likely to be in the future two of the m
historically interesting of his poems, as descriptive
the tone of the age at two distant periods of his li
But it may be questioned whether the interest is

ather biographical than historical, whether, in fact, he change of tone was not in the age, but in Tennyson himself. For there can be no doubt that he interval of sixty years, over which the aged squire n the second poem looks back so mournfully, was for he English people a period of active and eager enterprise, of social betterment and national prosperity. The grave forebodings of the poem, the sense of dismay t the ills of mortality, reflect the mood of the poet, ot of the people. He would probably have replied hat the poem was a dramatic representation of old ge, and he disclaimed any identity with the portraits f his imagination; but it is impossible for an author o insist positively on his entire personal detachment rom his poetic impersonations of thought and character. The choice of subject and its treatment mark nmistakably the dominant ideas; nor can an essentially lyrical poet give fervid expression to any feelings ut his own.

On the whole, it must be admitted that the two last olumes fall below the level of his verse at its prime; or could one expect or desire that after threescore ears and ten a poet's age should not affect the force nd fertility of his writing and his general outlook on fe. Some of these late poems are overweighted with hought, the diction is too emphatic, the colour of his editations takes a more sombre tinge than heretofore, and a certain cloudiness gathers over his loftier tterances. Yet in Demeter and Persephone we have ill the delicate handling, the self-restraint, the severe r of his earlier compositions. The ancient allegory f the Earth goddess, the figure of Nature in flower nd in decay, of the disappearance and return of the

harvest, is finely enlarged into the moral conception light eventually conquering darkness, of Heaven final prevailing over the sunless halls of Hades. The lin subjoined are full of his old picturesque charm—

> "Once more the reaper in the gleam of dawn
> Will see me by the landmark far away
> Blessing his field, or seated in the dusk
> Of even, by the lonely threshing-floor,
> Rejoicing in the Harvest and the grange."

And one well-known passage seems to connect, by simile, Demeter's vision of her daughter with telepath intimations—one of those obscure psychical phen mena which have recently come within the scope scientific research—

> "Last, as the likeness of a dying man,
> Without his knowledge, flits from him to warn
> A far-off friendship that he comes no more."

The passing of such shadows over the brain is we known to be an old and perplexing experience; ar Crabbe, who collected the legends of the seashor alludes to such a visitation in one of his Tales.

Of Tiresias some mention has already been mad Possibly the miscellaneous character of these piec may be thought to do some damage to their collecti impressiveness, by suggesting that stray leaves ma have been collected and appended to the princip poem in each volume. "Owd Roa," a story of a do told in Lincolnshire dialect that cannot be understoo without a glossary, becomes wearisome in more tha sixty stanzas; the more so because, being placed in tl latest complete edition between Demeter and Vastnes

t finds the reader unprepared for such abrupt alterna-
ions of style and subject. No one, as has been said,
vould count it unnatural or unbecoming that in many
f these poems the shade which perpetually hung
ver Tennyson's brooding mind should have become
arker in the late evening of his days. His sympathy
vith human unhappiness repeatedly shows itself in
uch pieces as Forlorn, The Leper's Bride, Romney's
Remorse, The Ring, The Bandit's Death,—all of which
xhibit the sorrowful sides of life, and illustrate
atience in suffering, repentance, or, in one instance,
evenge. In the poem of Forlorn, where a mother
djures her daughter not to marry without confess-
ng to her lover a long-past frailty, the tone is too
ehement; and the same subject has been more
motionally handled in one of George Meredith's
arliest poems, Margaret's Bridal Eve; where the
nother disregards moral scruples, and takes the more
atural part of urging the girl to conceal her fault;
ut she confesses, is renounced by the lover, and dies.
f the two versions one must prefer that of Meredith,
vho strikes a superior keynote, and creates the right
agic situation by throwing the strain of conscience and
he merit of self-sacrifice entirely upon the daughter.

The same gloominess of atmosphere overhangs The
Death of Œnone. The beautiful mountain-nymph of
Tennyson's youth, passionately lamenting her desertion
pon Mount Ida, has now become soured and vindic-
ve; she is a resentful wife to whom Paris, dying from
he poisoned arrow, crawls "lame, crooked, reeling, livid,
hrough the mist," imploring her to heal him. Œnone
urns him as an adulterer who may "go back to his
dulteress and die"; yet at his death she throws her-

self into the flames of his pyre. Tennyson said tha he considered this poem even more strictly classical i form and language than the old Œnone. To some o us, nevertheless, it may seem that its tone of ster reprobation jars with the style and feeling of antiqu Hellenic tradition. The story is taken from a shor passage in a late Greek writer;[1] and we may remem ber that in Homer the adulteress Helen is found livin happily and honourably after the war with her hus band in Sparta. And Tennyson's propensity to en force grave moral lessons has led him to lay the las so heavily on Paris as to disparage Œnone and provok compassion for the sinner.

The spirituality of the East, whence all great religion of the world have originated, had a strong attractio for his meditative temperament; but he never threw its deeper philosophy into concrete form, though h sketched the beginning of a poem upon Ormuzd an Ahriman, the Manichæan spirits of good and evi Akbar's Dream, the single study made by Tennyson o an authentic Asiatic figure, does indeed embody th lofty ideal of an eclectic Faith transcending formalism sectarian intolerance, and the idols of the crowd, an seeking for some spacious theology that shall compre hend the inner significance and aspirations of all externa worships. Akbar, however, was not, could not be, great spiritual leader of men; he was a large-minde politic emperor ruling over manifold races and conflict ing creeds; and he himself foresaw that his eclecti system could not take root or endure. This genera conception of his character and position is drawn i grand outline, though the subject is too large for s

[1] Apollodorus.

hort a poem; and the concluding Hymn to the Sun is majestic song of praise—

"Adoring Him the Timeless in the flame that measures Time."

The last poem that Tennyson finished was The Dreamer, who hears in his sleep the wail of the Earth olling through space, the mournful music of a sphere ppressed by the burden of the sins and misfortunes f the race whom it is bearing along, helpless and unilling, to an uncertain destiny. The poet endeavours o cheer our disconsolate planet by the assurance that

"All's well that ends well,
Whirl and follow the Sun,"

hich may be understood allegorically as of hope in he Light that leads.

The Death of Œnone and Akbar's Dream, with other inor pieces, are in the volume which closed, in 1892, he long series of poems that had held two generations nder their charm. Throughout that period, almost qual in length to Queen Victoria's reign, Tennyson aintained his foremost place among the Victorian oets; and although one can mark the slow decline of genius that had reached its zenith fifty years before eath extinguished it, yet hardly any English poet as so long retained power, or has published so little hat might have been omitted with benefit to his ermanent reputation. Nor will it ever be forotten that in his eighty-first year he wrote Crossing he Bar, where the noiseless indraw of the ebb-tide rom the land back into the ocean is a magnificent hage of the soul's quiet parting from life on earth and s absorption into the vastness of infinity.

It is apparent from the *Memoir*, at any rate, tha the weight of more than fourscore years depressed non of Tennyson's interest in literature and art, in politica and philosophic questions; nor did it slacken his enjoy ment of humorous observation or anecdote. Amon many recollections he told of Hallam (the historian saying to him, "I have lived to read Carlyle's *Frenc Revolution*, but I cannot get on with it, the style is s abominable"; and of Carlyle groaning over Hallam' *Constitutional History*, "Eh, it's a miserable skeleton o a book"—which brings out into summary comparison two opposite schools of history-writing, the picturesqu and the precise. He praised Carlyle's honesty, bu said that he knew nothing about poetry or art. He told how the sage of Chelsea once came to smok a pipe with him one evening in London, when th talk turned upon the immortality of the soul, an Carlyle said, "Eh, old Jewish rags, you must clea your mind of all that," and likened man's sojourn on earth to a traveller's rest at an inn; whereupon Tennyson rejoined that the traveller knew whither he was bound, and where he should sleep on the nigh following. Fitzgerald, who was present, might hav quoted to them his own stanza from Omar Khayyam which gives the true inner meaning of the famou parable of the dervish who insisted on taking up hi quarters in the king's palace, which he declared to b nothing more than a caravanserai.[1]

Robert Browning's death in December 1889 dis

[1] "'Tis but a tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another guest."

ressed him acutely; it was a forewarning to the elder f two brothers in verse for whom posterity must ecide whether they are to be equals in renown. "A reat thinker in verse," Tennyson said of him; and gain, "He has plenty of music in him, but cannot et it out; he has intellect enough for a dozen of us, ut he has not got the glory of words." Their disinctive styles and qualities are so well marked that ach poet sets the other in relief; and the generation hat had two such interpreters is singularly fortunate. n the junior poets of his later day he took a sympathetic nterest. He wrote kindly to Rudyard Kipling, whose atriotic verse pleased him, and to William Watson, vho twelve months later paid a grateful tribute to his nemory in one of the best among many threnodies.

His last residence at Farringford was in the spring nd early summer of 1892, when he made a yachting oyage to the Channel Islands; and by the autumn he vas at Aldworth in Surrey. Lord Selborne and the Master of Balliol visited him, but he told Jowett that e was not strong enough for the usual discussions etween them on religion and philosophy. Jowett nswered, "Your poetry has an element of philosophy nore to be considered than any regular philosophy in England," which might be interpreted as an ambiguous nd possibly not an extravagant compliment.

The final chapter of the *Memoir* gives briefly some f his latest sayings, and describes a peaceful and oble ending. He found his Christianity undisturbed y contentious sects and creeds, but, he said, "I dread he losing of forms; I have expressed this in my Akbar." When, at the end of September 1892, he ell seriously ill, and Sir Andrew Clark arrived, the

physician and his patient fell to discussing Gray's Elegy; and a few days later, although he had become much worse, he sent for his Shakespeare, but he was obliged to let his son read to him. Next day he said "I want the blinds up; I want to see the sky and the light." It was a glorious morning, and the warm sunshine was flooding the Sussex weald and the line of the South Downs, which he could see from his window. He lay with his hand resting on his Shakespeare, unable to read; and after midnight on the 6th October he passed away very quietly. The funeral service in Westminster Abbey, with its two anthems—Crossing the Bar and The Silent Voices—filling the long-drawn aisles and rising to the fretted vault above the heads of a great congregation, will long be remembered by those who were present. His pleasant and prosperous life had been varied by few griefs or troubles; he had attained signal success in the high calling that he had set before himself; he had won honour and fame among all English-speaking peoples and he departed at the coming of the time when no man can work.

A comparison of Tennyson with Browning has already been touched upon. Browning's obscurity when he was engaged upon his minute mental anatomy, his manner of leaving his thoughts roughly hewn, are points of contrast with Tennyson's clear and chiselled phrasing; we have less light as we go deeper. The truth is that Browning's psychological studies are too diffuse and discursive for the compact and vivid treatment that is essential to poetry. And the peculiarity of his genius—the strain and hard

ervice that he imposed upon the English tongue—
place him to some extent outside the right apostolic
uccession, in its direct line, of our national poets,
f those who have enlarged the capacity of our
anguage for imaginative and musical expression,
vithout subjecting the instrument to rough usage.
Among these Tennyson may certainly be counted.
To lay stress upon the metrical variety of his poems,
upon his experiments in classical prosody, or upon
his development of the resources of the language
or harmony, would be to repeat what has been
requently said by others. It may be questioned
whether he could give his rhythm the swift movement,
s of a thoroughbred racer on turf, that is produced
y Mr. Swinburne in some of his most elaborate
ompositions, where the accent and the quantity fall
ogether; nor had he the resonant organ-notes of
Milton when he was playing a symphony upon the
pen vowels. Yet his power of smoothing down
inguistic harshness and difficulties was remarkable;
nd his skill in the arrangement of words to connote
hysical sensations has been already mentioned. His
ommand over the long, flowing line, which no poet
efore him had used so frequently, gave it the
exibility that served him well in such pieces as
The Northern Farmer, where the broad dialect required
ree play; while in other poems he could give this
netre the sounding roll of a chant or a chorus. On
he instrumental resources of blank verse we know
hat he set the highest value. "Blank verse," he said
nce, "can be the finest mode of expression in our
anguage"; he had his own secrets of arranging and
iversifying it; and all the latest composers in this

essentially English metre have profited by his lesson. But for a thorough analysis of Tennyson's managemen of blank verse, in comparison with the other master of the art, the student must again be referred to M J. B. Mayor's "Chapters on English Metre," where th styles of Tennyson and Browning, as representative of modern English versification, are critically examined.

It will have been seen that some attempt has bee made in these pages to combine a short biography o Tennyson with a running commentary on his poem as they illustrate his intellectual habit and the circun stances of his life. And to some extent the resu accords with Taine's generalising treatment of literatur as a bundle of documents that reveal and record th conditions, social and climatic, moral and material, i which it was produced, and thus elucidate histor Yet in the case of a writer who is almost our co temporary, this analytical method is too easy to b of much importance, for there is an obvious an necessary correspondence between his work and h world; the man and his *milieu* are both well know to us; the characteristics are those of his class an his nation; we have only to put together causes an effects that show manifestly the correlation betwee the environment and its product. Among the sig of his time may be noticed, in particular, the influen on his poetry of the scientific spirit, the growth accurate habits of observation, the demand for exact tude in details, for minute delineation of accessorie for a patient study of small things; the spirit, in fac which has affected art and literature in the form what is now called realism. No poet has been mo solicitous than Tennyson about precision in his lan

scape painting, or more carefully correct in his allusions to animals and plants; and in most instances the precision of fact strengthens the ornamental form, like a solid building architecturally decorated. Burke, in his treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, observes that "there are reasons in nature why the obscure idea, when properly conveyed, should be more affecting in poetry than the clear"; but in Tennyson's verse the exactitude has in no way detracted from its beauty. And his metaphors are much more than figures of style; they very often do really intensify a vivid sensation. Yet the scientific impulse carries him too far when experimental physics are made to furnish a metaphor for unbearable emotion—

> "Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
> That grief has shaken into frost."

We have to understand that at a certain low temperature water, if shaken, will expand into ice and break the vessel that contains it; and so a heart that is benumbed with grief will be rent if it is agitated by a too painful recollection. We may admire the technical skill that has compressed all this into two short lines; but the metaphor is too ingenious, and the effort of seizing the analogy undoubtedly checks our sensibility to the poet's distress. He is much more in his true poetical element when he returns to the contemplation of the mystery that no scientific research can penetrate or unravel, when he plucks the flower in the crannied wall—

> "If I could understand
> What you are, root and all,
> I should know what God and man is."

"Toute l'immensité traverse l'humble fleur du penseu contemplée," says Victor Hugo; the microscope an telescope, the vast prospects and retrospects throw open to us by Science, still leave the world no less a unintelligible enigma than before. Between mytholog and science, between the capricious elemental divinitie and the conception of fixed mechanical laws, we trav from the earliest to the latest stages of man's perpetua endeavour to decipher the secrets of nature. The myth have always lent themselves to poetry, which indee may be said to have created them; and Tennyson ha given new form and moral significance to some of th ancient fables. But his imaginative faculty was als applied to the metaphysical problems which lie beyon the range of discovery; and he has treated the laws o nature as the index and intimations of the infinit Power that moves somewhere behind them. Whateve may be said of him as a philosopher, it may be grante that in this region of ideas he has produced som splendid poetry, and has illustrated the questionin spirit of his age. In the latest poems his dismay a the pettiness of man's part and place in the cosmi evolution, at the vision of a godless ocean sappin and swallowing up all definite beliefs, seems to hav gradually quieted down into the conviction that higher and purified existence surely awaits us. Suc short pieces as Doubt and Prayer, Faith, The Silen Voices, and others in the small volume of 1892, ar passing Thoughts versified, like the gnomic sentence in prose of Pascal or Joubert. Their tone is generall hopeful and devout; and the Silent Voices of the dea call him

"Forward to the starry track,
Glimmering up the height beyond me,
On, and always on."

In Wordsworth's famous Ode the celestial light is behind us, and slowly fades into the light of common day—

"Whither has fled the visionary gleam?"

We look back at "the immortal sea which brought us hither." In Tennyson's poem of Merlin and the Gleam the light is in front of us across the great water—

"There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers the Gleam."

If, again, we descend from these spheres of lofty speculation, and turn to the positive and practical aspects of Tennyson's poetry, we may allow that it indoubtedly represents the ideas and tastes, the inherited predilections, the prevailing currents of thought, of Englishmen belonging to his class and his generation. Moderation in politics, refined culture, religious liberalism chequered by doubt, a lively interest in the advance of scientific discovery coupled with alarm lest it might lead us astray, attachment to ancient institutions, larger views of the duty of the State towards its people, and increasing sympathy with poverty and distress—all these feelings and tendencies find their expression in Tennyson's poems, and will be recognised as the salient features of the national character. In the direction of political ideals his imaginative faculty enabled him sometimes not

only to discern the movement, but also to lead the way. The imperial conception—realising the British empire's unity in multiplicity, regarding it as a deep rooted tree which sustains and nourishes its flourishing branches, while the branches in return give support and vitality to the stem—was proclaimed in his verse before it had attained its present conspicuous popularity. He saw that the edifice had been quietly set up by builders who made no noise over their work and he called upon all English-speaking folk to join hands and consolidate it. The revival and spread of profound veneration for the Throne, as the common centre and head of a scattered dominion, is another outcome of the same idea that owes its development to the last thirty years of Queen Victoria's reign; and some share in promoting it may fairly be attributed to the Laureate's stately verse. In all these respects therefore, it will be right for the future historian to treat Tennyson as a representative of the Victorian period, and to draw inferences from his work as to the general intellectual and political tendencies of the nineteenth century. Yet a single writer can at most only present particular aspects of a general view, coloured and magnified in poetry for the purposes of his art, and refracted through the medium of his own individuality, which is always strong in men of great genius, who are apt to survey their world from different standpoints, and often to take opposite sides as in the instance of Byron and Scott. It could therefore be of little advantage to enlarge further upon this theory in a biography.

In the domain of pure literature it is less difficult to measure Tennyson's influence, and to define his

osition, so far as one may venture upon doing so within few years of his death. One can perceive, looking ackward, that his genius flowered in due season; here had been a plentiful harvest of verse in the receding generation, but it had been garnered, and he ground was clear. About this time English oetry had relapsed into one of those intervals of epression that precede a fresh rise; the popular taste as artificial and decadent, running down to the seudo-romantic and conventional forms, to a false ote of sentiment and to affectation in style. The hour ad come for the man who could take up the bequest f that brilliant and illustrious group who, in the first uarter of the century, raised English poetry to a eight far above the classic elegance of the eighteenth entury, and beyond the domestic, nature-loving, erse of Cowper and Crabbe. A new impulse was eeded to lift it, and to break in upon the dulness hat seems just then to have settled down, like a assing cloud, upon every form of art. This flat and pen space gave Tennyson a fair start upon the ourse, and favoured the recognition of his superiority; though his general popularity must have spread radually, since we have seen that even in 1850, when he choice of a new Laureate had to be made, his claim as not admitted without deliberation in high political uarters. Yet all genuine judges had already found Tennyson the poet who could revive again the haginative power of verse, who possessed the spell hat endows with beauty and artistic precision the cidents and impressions which a weaker hand can nly reproduce in vague outline, or tamely; while he master is both luminous and accurate. His first

welcome was in the acclamation of his contemporaries and herein lay the promise of his poetry, for to the departing generation the coming man has little to say. During Tennyson's youth the whole complexion and "moving circumstance" of the age had undergone a great alteration. It was the uproar and martial clang, the drums and trampling of the long war against France, the mortal strife between revolutionary and reactionary forces, that kindled the fiery indignation of Shelley and Byron, and affected Coleridge and even Wordsworth, "in their hot youth, when George the Third was king." Tennyson's opportunity arrived when these thunderous echoes had died away, when the Reform Bill had become law, and when the era of peace in Europe and comfortable prosperity in England, that marks the middle of the nineteenth century, had just set in. This change in the temper of the times is reflected in his poetry; the wild and stormy element has disappeared; his impressions of the earth, sea, and sky are mainly peaceful, melancholy, mysterious; he is looking on the happy autumn fields, or listening in fancy to the ripple of the brook, or the plash of a quiet sea.

Length of life, maturity of experience, abundant leisure, and domestic happiness must also be reckoned among the tranquillising influences that have imparted the charms of equanimity, self-restraint, and exquisite finish to the best of Tennyson's poetry.

In 1890 Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was Tennyson's junior by only twenty-three days, wrote to him:—

"I am proud of my birth year, and humbled when I think of who were and who are my coevals. Darwin, the destroyer and creator; Lord Houghton, the pleasant and kind-hearted

ver of men of letters; Gladstone, whom I leave it to you characterise, but whose vast range of intellectual powers w will question; Mendelssohn, whose music still rings in ır ears; and the Laureate, whose 'jewels five words long' - many of them a good deal longer — sparkle in our emories." [1]

his is a brilliant constellation of talents to have shot ɔ out of a single year (1809); and the lives of all ıese men, except Mendelssohn, were long; they had ll scope for their various capacities. But among ennyson's precursors in the poetic arena three leaders ıd died young in the foremost ranks, Byron, Shelley, ıd Keats: two of them in the midst of feverish activity, ıey were all cut off suddenly and prematurely. The ım-total of their years added together exceeds by no ore than eleven the number that were allotted to ennyson's account. And if the productive period of poet's life may be taken to begin at twenty-one hich is full early), it sums up to about thirty-one ears for all these three poets, and to above sixty ears for Tennyson alone. By the time that Coleridge as twenty-six he had produced (we are told [2]) all the etry by which he will be remembered, and critics ve declared that Wordsworth did all his good work the decade between 1798 and 1808. It was Tenny-n's good fortune not only to reach a greater age an any other poet of his century, but also to sustain e excellence of his verse for a longer period. ordsworth, indeed, lived and wrote up to old age; d in him, as in Tennyson, we have the contemplative ımour, the balance of mind swaying occasionally

[1] *Memoir*.

[2] *Coleridge*, by H. D. Traill ("Men of Letters" series).

between cheerfulness and dejection, that is natur to men who are passing quietly through all th stages of life. Nor should we forget that each of the was most fortunate in the affection of his family an in a well-ordered home; while Byron and Shelle were incessantly at war with society, and Coleridge matrimonial venture brought him nothing but vex tion and embarrassment.

Tennyson's face and demeanour, which have bee preserved in the fine portraits of him by Watts an Millais, were so remarkable, that at the first sight o took the impression of unusual dignity and intellectu distinction. His voice, gesture, and bearing imperso ated, so to speak, his character and reputation; h appearance fulfilled the common expectation (so ofte disappointed) of perceiving at once something singul and striking in the presence of a celebrity. Jowe wrote of him after his death that he was a magnifice man who stood before you in his native refineme and strength, and that the unconventionality of h manners was in keeping with the originality of h figure. He enjoyed his well-earned fame and th tokens of enthusiastic admiration that came to hi from near and far; he listened to applause wit straightforward complacency. From the sensitivene to which the race of poets is proverbially liable he w not free; and there are passages in his poetry whic indicate a shrinking anticipation of the inquest that now held over a notable man immediately after h death, to scrutinise his private life, and to satia public curiosity. Under the title of The Dead Proph he published (1885) verses that express this feeling b the rather ghastly image of a great teacher of th

people "whose word had won him a noble name," left stripped and naked after his death before a staring crowd, his corpse laid bare by his friends, and insulted by those whom the Prophet had offended. This poem was written, as the *Memoir* tells us, because Tennyson felt strongly that the world likes to know about the "roughness, eccentricities, and defects of a man of genius, rather than what he really is." It is a very natural popular craving to desire minute knowledge of everything that completes a full-length portrait and re-creates the living bodily presence of a famous man who has passed away; nor would any man of his eminence in our time be more likely to gain than to lose by such a scrutiny than Tennyson. But in the Recollections contributed to the *Memoir* by some distinguished men who were qualified to speak of him by long friendship and close personal intercourse, we have ample descriptions of his private life, his way of thought, his conversation, and the various sides of his character. We know already what he really was; we are aware of his susceptibilities; and by respecting them with the deference which they would command if Tennyson were still alive, we shall best honour the memory of an illustrious Englishman and a true and noble poet.

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